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Sanford Friedman

OCEAN

The center of Seaside's social life was not the public beach, but the Casino on Ocean Avenue. There, on top of the low clay cliffs that lined the Jersey coast for miles, the summer residents pursued their pleasures as if the beach and ocean did not exist. The Casino's facilities included bathhouses, a restaurant, a lounge, a card room, an outdoor dance floor and bandstand, and a fifty foot pool.

Stephen had received his first swimming lessons in the pool when he was three, but now, at the age of six, he had very mixed and complicated feelings about it. On the one hand, he adored the pool just because it was made of water. That in itself was saying a lot since Stephen loved the water more than almost anything—not more than Clarry, of course, and not more than his marine collection, but more than Mommy sometimes, and more than Daddy at others, and certainly a whole lot more than his brother, Roggie. The other thing he liked about the pool was the fact that you could jump into it whenever you liked, providing of course you had waited an hour after lunch. There was always someone around to keep an eye on you—like Mommy right this minute: "Three bam." —that was its one advantage over the ocean.

But whatever its advantages, the swimming pool just didn't compare with the ocean. In the first place the ocean, salty or not, wasn't filled with this irritating chemical that burned your eyes. In the second place there weren't all these grown-ups eating and knitting and gossiping and playing Mah Jong and Michigan rummy and backgammon and bridge, and whispering about the Lindbergh baby—at the ocean you could get off on your own. In the

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third place there weren't all these older children—including Roggie—showing off by plunging into the water an inch away from your nose, trying so hard to blind and drown you. The ocean didn't need to be churned up artificially, it had a way of churning itself up—of making its own stir, its own splash and spray and waves, wilder than any kicking children.

And yet, for some reason, the ocean's wildness—the feature that attracted Stephen most—made the grown-ups nervous, and they forbade him to go into the water alone. That hateful rule created awful problems for Stephen, not only because no one trusted Bruce, the lifeguard, to rescue him if he should drown, but also because Mommy was suffering from something a little bit like chicken pox called neurasthenia that made her skin break out and itch terribly, and she wasn't supposed to set foot in salt water. Stephen had a theory of his own that the water would wash away the sores and scabs that covered Mommy's back (and stained her sheets and nightgowns), but Mommy had explained that brine was an irritant. Clarry had a problem, too, about going into the ocean: she claimed she couldn't swim. But Stephen knew it wasn't all *that* simple because once, when he asked her why she stayed in her uniform instead of putting on a bathing suit when they went down to the beach, Clarry laughed and said, "cause they don't make 'em big enough for me"; and another time, when Stephen asked her why she refused even to wade, Clarry said, "What's the matter with you, sugar? These folks don't want my kind messin' up their water." That left only Daddy, but Daddy had to work in New York five days a week and could take Stephen into the ocean only on week-ends and Friday afternoons when, like today, he came back from the City early, at four-fifteen . . . Stephen looked up at the big clock on the white wall outside the members' lounge: 2:00. . . . It would be hours and hours and hours before Daddy's train arrived.

. . . But even so, even though he was not allowed to go into the ocean except on weekends, Stephen preferred the sea to the pool, the beach to the casino—at least there was the sand. Not only could you embrace the sand and eat the sand and drool your saliva into it, and punch and pat it, and roll and run and turn somersaults on it, and flop and jump and stand on your head on it, and let it trickle through your fingers, and dribble it between your

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daddy's toes, and throw it into your brother's eyes and pick it out of your belly-button; but also, down by the water's edge, when the tide was low, you could dig pits and pools and caves and caverns in the sand, you could build bridges, moats, canals, towers, temples, castles, kingdoms in the sand.

As a matter of fact, Stephen Wolfe had quite a reputation for his sand creations on the Seaside public beach. Grown-ups and children alike admired his patience and imagination, and stood enthralled while Stephen patty-caked pies and cones and domes in the sand, let the sand drip from his fingers like paraffin, creating pagodas and minarets, mounded and moulded the sand into Pueblo huts and Moroccan hovels, amassed great piles of sand and made them into ziggurats, sliced through others with a stave from an orange-crate and produced Assyrian palaces, Egyptian pyramids and Rockefeller Center, transformed the stave into London Bridge, scooped out giant reservoirs and filled them with water piped from the sea, engineered a system of canals and water-ways through a city the size of Bruges, and spent entire days reconstructing Babylon, Jerusalem and Carcassonne.

And yet, no matter how arduously he labored, how deep he dug his moats, how high he flung his bulwarks, how much he reinforced his walls, at some point in the night the sea came in and stole his castles from him. At first Stephen had thought Daddy was the culprit, and then he decided that it was Roggie who sneaked down to the beach and trampled his creations, until one day Clarry made it clear to him. "There's a war goin' on between them two—between the ocean and the land. Has been since the beginnin' of creation. That old ocean's on the warpath 'cause it come first and the land come after. It jealous now 'cause the land is so much larger. Jealous 'cause the land has got itself collected—sittin' cool and pretty—while's the ocean, it always on the go, restless and rampagin'. Sort of like the difference between a man and woman. Yes sir," Clarry chuckled, "that what it remind *me* of: the natural, born-in difference between a man and woman. Why that old ocean's like a starvin' animal, lappin' at the land. Ain't nothin' gonna satisfy it 'til it's licked us all way." Stephen agreed. The trouble with the ocean—its only drawback—was that it wanted to gobble up everything in sight. But on the other hand, it gave things back. It gave back all

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those treasures that he had been collecting now for three successive summers—his great marine collection that was resting right this minute safe and sound at home on the radiator box in front of his bedroom window . . .

"Stevie, kitten," Mommy called.

Quickly, not in answer to his mother's call but in order to escape it, Stephen submerged, swam under water and came up on the other side of the pool. Holding onto the tiled conduit, Stephen hugged the side of the pool and held his breath, hidden from sight—or so he thought—listening to Mommy and the girls playing Mah Jong.

". . . Two bam. One crack. Six dots. Pung! Flower. East wind. Soap. Kong!"

"Come on, kitten," Mommy called again. "I can see you there. You've been in for over an hour."

"Green. Four bam. Four dots. South. Red. Flower. Five crack. Mah Jong!"

Stephen peeked over the side of the pool and saw Mrs. Tishman press her jeweled fingers down and move the rest of her row of tiles up like linotype onto the top of her rack.

"I tell you she's been to the stable today," Aunt Ida remarked.

"She stepped in it good!" Aunt Fanny corroborated.

"Up to her knees!" Mrs. Kanig added.

As always, this puzzling commentary was followed by a din as familiar to Stephen as the sound of the milkman loading the empties into his wagon: the ladies were mixing the Mah Jong tiles. "Excuse me, girls," Harriet said. "I'm going to get that child out of the water before he turns into a fish." Hearing this, Stephen pushed off from the side and swam toward the center of the pool. "Come on, Stevie, come out now. I'm not fooling with you anymore."

"Oh, Mommy," Stephen pleaded.

"Come on now."

"Just five more minutes?"

"No! You heard me: out!"

"But Roggie's—"

"I don't want to hear about Roger. If you expect to go in the ocean with Daddy later on, you'll come out *now*—right this minute!"

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"Oh, Mommy," Stephen complained, ascending the semi-circular steps at the shallow end of the pool.

"Look at you! Look at your eyes, they're bloodshot. You won't be happy until you turn into a fish. Come on now," Mommy said, taking Stephen's hand and leading him towards the Mah Jong table. "I want you to go inside and change your suit. Come; I'll give you the bathhouse key."

"There he is! There's my angel," Aunt Ida glowed. *"Unbeschreiblich,* Hattie, is that a doll!"

"Stevie," Mommy coached, "give Aunt Ida a kiss."

"Hello, Aunt Ida," Stephen said. Kiss! "Hello, Aunt Fanny." Kiss.

"Huhwo, wuffie," Aunt Fanny gabbled, her mouth, as always, packed with pralines.

"What about *me?*" Mrs. Tishman asked. "Don't *I* get a kiss?"

"Hello, Mrs. Tishman." Kiss. "Hello, Mrs. Kanig." Kiss.

"All right, darling," Mommy said. "Here's the key. Now go and change your suit."

Stephen did as he was told: took the key and trotted around the pool towards the bathhouses. As he did so, Aunt Ida repeated the word *unbeschreiblich,* and Stephen thought: there are just too many words like that—like pung and kong and Mah Jong—that don't make any sense . . . As he entered Row A of the bathhouses, Stephen slowed down to a walk to protect his bare feet from the splintery boards. He loved this part of the Casino. Its long, narrow, east-west streets, intersected by shorter, broader avenues, constituted a city for him—a city in which he could explore and hide and chase around for hours without ever really getting lost or run over. Occasionally, among the million, identical, gray wooden doors (each with its six-inch diamond cut way above the level of a grown-up's eyes) Stephen would discover one that wasn't locked—a bathhouse that had not been rented for the summer!—and appropriate it for himself, turning it into a tower or dungeon, a place in which to think his private thoughts, hold dialogues with imaginary friends, store treasures and eavesdrop on his neighbors. It was in one of these dark cells that he had first overheard the words: "Hauptman," "F. D. R.," "*tits*" and "excruciate," before some officious attendant

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evicted him and made sure the door was locked for the remainder of the season.

When Stephen reached the end of Row A, he turned right briskly, padded past B and C and D Streets, took a left at E Street, until he reached the door marked 97, and inserted the key. Once inside, he ignored the two turkish towels hanging on separate hooks on the right hand wall, ignored the first one on the left and pulled down the second. After locking the door behind him, he walked to the end of E Street, turned left and meandered towards the men's shower. On the way, between E and D Streets, he came to the wall marked WOMEN. As always, as he passed, Stephen tried surreptitiously to catch a glimpse of the women inside, but the barrier obstructed his view. He knew what lay beyond was identical to what lay beyond the wall marked MEN: one enormous room without a ceiling, one long, green wooden bench, one clothes wringer and three unpartitioned showers with rusty chains. After the showers came a little house with a cement floor, two white sinks, two silver mirrors, two white urinals, three gray booths and three white toilets. Long ago, when he was little, Stephen had gone behind the wall marked WOMEN almost every day with Mommy, except when Roggie took him behind the wall marked MEN. On weekends, of course, he had always gone behind the wall marked MEN with Daddy and that's the way it had been for years and years until one summer when Mommy announced he had grown too big to continue coming with her anymore. When Stephen had asked her to come, instead, with *him,* Mommy only laughed and said she couldn't. That had left him slightly confused. Not only had he grown accustomed to going to the Women's, he considered it his proper place—until, that is, Daddy explained that it was much more fun and natural "for the boys to get off on their own" and "keep the girls out of their hair." After that, the whole thing had seemed much more reasonable, and Stephen didn't mind being restricted to the area behind the wall marked MEN—as a matter of fact, he considered it a privilege. The only thing that bothered him about the women and made him try to peer beyond the barrier every time he passed, was that Stephen didn't know exactly what it was he had seen when he was little that he was supposed to have forgotten now that he was big . . .

After crossing D Street, he came to the wall marked MEN,

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casually tossed his towel over his shoulder and strolled around the barrier. Inside there was an old, old, fat man, standing in front of the long green bench, taking off his bathing suit. As Stephen approached, the old, old, fat man said hello. Stephen said hello in return and sat down in the sunshine to watch the man disrobe. As always with grown-ups, under his bathing suit, the old, old man wore one of those silvery pouches that looked like a horse's feed-bag over his peepee-er. Stephen had not yet figured out the purpose of those pouches . . . did they keep the grown-ups warm? Or were they more like Mommy's hairnet—that awful brown web she wove around her head at night before she went to bed. Was that the reason little boys didn't have to wear them, because they didn't have any hair to keep in place? . . . Stephen watched the old man roll down over his enormous belly the elastic, supporting the silvery pouch, until the whole thing—elastic and pouch together—turned into a figure 8 around his bloodless ankles and he stepped out of it clumsily. When he bent over to pick up both his bathing suit and the figure 8, the old man's belly sagged like the underside of the hammock when Daddy was lying in it. Also, the old man's peepee-er looked like the neck of a dead chicken, and Stephen had to chuckle.

"What's the matter with you, sonny?" the old man asked. "Ain't you ever seen your father? What are you doing anyway, sitting there like that? This ain't a peep-show." Stephen could tell from the harshness of his voice that the old man was angry and he turned away guiltily. A moment later he heard the old man exclaim, "Oooisch!" and Stephen turned around again, only to be confronted by the chicken neck bobbing up and down as the old man cowered and cavorted under the icy shower. "Look here, sonny," he grumbled, releasing the rusty chain and stopping the flow of water, "ain't you got anything better to do than sit there staring at me?"

"Can I run your bathing suit through the wringer for you?" Stephen asked.

"No, you can't," the old man answered curtly, donning his terry-cloth robe to protect his modesty. "You're Sol Wolfe's son, ain't you?" he asked, collecting his belongings. "The younger," he added sardonically, as he moved towards the exit—his clogs clattering over the floor boards—and disappeared.

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The ambiguity of these last words left Stephen puzzled and staring after the old man, but his concern was only momentary. A second later he hopped off the bench, pulled down his bathing suit and ran to the first shower. Standing on tip-toe, stretching his left arm until the muscles ached, Stephen was just able to reach the rusty ring and pull it down. Taking pains to keep the freezing water from spattering his shoulders, he doused his bathing suit, released the chain and skipped over to the wringer. Carefully, he inserted a corner of his bloated, blue wool bathing suit—black now from the water—between the ivory-colored rubber rollers and began to turn the crank. Almost as if they were synchronized, Stephen's tongue emerged from his mouth at the same rate of speed as his bathing suit from between the rollers, so that by the time the garment was completely wrung-out, flat and dry and blue again—some of the surface hairs even silver in the sunlight—Stephen was licking his nose. Indeed, he loved the clothes wringer so much that when he was finished with his bathing suit, he repeated the entire process with his turkish towel from dousing through cranking. As a little boy, Stephen had tried, without success, to run his fingers and even his tongue between the rollers, and he still looked forward to the day when he would be tall enough to experiment with his peepee-er.

When he was finished, Stephen wrapped his damp towel around his waist, wandered back to E 97, changed into his red wool bathing suit, put on his orange water wings and waited impatiently for Daddy to come.

By the time Saul arrived, an unpleasant wind was blowing out of the south-east and the sky was overcast. The ocean didn't look the least bit tempting—after all, it was September 7th, the summer was over and this was to be their last week-end before moving back to New York—but Saul knew how disappointed the boys would be if he cancelled their dip, and he got into his bathing suit. "Come on, kids," he said. "We better hurry. There's going to be a storm."

"In that case, Dad, let's go down by the wooden steps," Roggie suggested.

Before Saul could answer, Stephen exclaimed, "No!"

"But Roggie's right, *kleine* dear. Look how much time we could save."

"No!"

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"All right. We'll go the way we always do."

"No fair!" Roggie objected. "Why do we always have to go *his* way?"

"I'll tell you what, sweetheart, why don't *you* go down the wooden steps, and Stevie and I'll go down the main one, and then we'll all meet on the beach."

"Why can't you come with me and let him go by himself, if he's so stubborn?"

"Because he's too little. You know he can't go by himself."

"Why can't Mommy take him?"

"Because Mommy's playing Mah Jong."

The question settled, Stephen turned to his brother and made a nefarious face like Dr. Fu Manchu about to pull the switch that would annihilate the whole white race.

"Look at him! Look at him!" Roggie shouted. "Stinker!"

"I'm *not* a stinker!"

"Listen, kids," Daddy intervened, "either we go this minute or we don't go at all. Come on now, Roggie. Let's see who'll get there first."

"Are you kidding, Dad?" Roggie scoffed.

"All right. On your mark, get set—" Even before Daddy had a chance to say go, Roggie tore away across the dance floor, around the bandstand, toward the narrow wooden stairs that scaled the cliffs from the beach to the Casino. At the same moment Stephen took hold of Daddy's hand and tugged him in the opposite direction: out of the Casino, down the gravel driveway, onto Ocean Avenue, toward Seaside's stellar attraction: the promenade and Grand Stairway, two blocks south.

Construction of the Grand Stairway was begun in 1888 and completed in 1891, at a time when Seaside had hopes of contending with Newport and Southampton for favor as the foremost resort on the Eastern Seaboard. Built of red sandstone in the shape of an "X," the stairway could be approached from either the north or south—it made no difference which, since its two broad descending flights were symmetrical and converged onto a central landing halfway down the side of the cliff before they branched off toward the beach in opposite directions. But in the forty-six summers that had passed since the ribbon-cutting ceremony, the elements—the merciless wind

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and spray—the bathers' clogs, and toy tin shovels had taken their toll of the stately stone newels and Victorian bas reliefs, the ornately carved balusters and rails, and had left the stairway a ruin, just as the years had ruined its earliest users—lovely young ladies with pink and yellow parasols—who sat, now, gray and withered dowagers, all bundled-up on stiff-backed benches along the promenade. And yet to Stephen the Stairway still retained its former grandeur. He considered it the most splendid in the world—except, perhaps, for the one in Central Park leading down to the fountain and the rowboat pond—and always insisted on using it.

When they reached the stairhead, Stephen saw the red flag flapping on Bruce's lifeguard pole, he saw the waves and whitecaps and the darkness gathering in the south-east. Instead of deterring him, these signs of storm only excited and spurred Stephen on, and he practically dragged Daddy after him, down the two long flights. At the foot of the south flight, stretched out on the sand, his head of curly black hair pillowed on his palms, was Roggie, trying for all the world to look completely casual, despite his heaving chest. "What took you so long, slowpoke?"

"I am not a slowpoke!"

"I've been waiting here an hour."

"You couldn't have. We only—"

"Come on, kids," Daddy interrupted. "Let's go in right away, before it gets too cold."

There were very few people left on the beach. Even those who had not been scared away by the on-coming storm, were leaving now because of the hour, straggling toward the Stairway, dragging their towels and umbrellas, toys and thermos bottles, backrests and inner-tubes across the littered sand. As Stephen ran toward the water, he spotted the old, old fat man he had seen in the shower earlier that afternoon, and he slowed down and waited for Daddy.

When their paths crossed, Daddy stopped and greeted the old man cheerfully. "Hello, Max."

"Hello, Sol."

"Boys, say hello to Mr. Strauss, the toughest pinochle player in New Jersey."

"Hello, Mr. Strauss," Roggie said, shaking hands.

"That's Roger, Max, my older boy," Daddy explained with pride.

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"And this is Stevie, the younger one. *Kleine,* say hello to Mr. Strauss."

"There's no need, Sol. The youngster and I have met," Mr. Strauss said insinuatingly. "Ain't we, sonny?"

Stephen looked blank.

"Have you, Max? Where was that?"

"In the shower room, this afternoon. I must say, Sol, the boy has got a most peculiar habit."

"Peculiar, Max?" Daddy asked defensively. "What do you mean?"

"Come, Sol," Mr. Strauss suggested, taking hold of Daddy's arm. "Walk me to the stairs a minute."

"Boys, you stay here and play, but don't go in 'til I come back. And no roughhouse."

"Okay, Dad," Roggie said, wrapping his arm around his brother protectively, "I'll take care of him."

When the grown-ups were out of earshot, Stephen whispered, "Roggie, what exactly does peculiar mean?"

"Peculiar! Well now, let's see. . . . Peculiar. That means kind of . . . oh, you know . . . kind of—I think I could tell you better by saying it in a sentence. Let's see now: 'the old lady . . . the old lady was very, very peculiar.' You understand?"

"Not exactly."

"Wait a minute. I'll think up another one. 'Ickes is a most peculiar name' "

"Who's Ickes?"

"What's the matter with you? Don't you know *anything?*"

Suddenly, startled by the breaking of a very large wave, Stephen exclaimed, "Gosh! Did you see that one? Let's go down and see what it's brought us."

"That's all you think the ocean's there for—don't you, Stevie? —to bring *you* presents." Stephen raced down to the tide line and waited impatiently for the leisurely surf to recede from the shore and reveal its store of treasures. "You heard what Daddy said: you can't go in 'til he comes back."

"I'm not going in," Stephen answered, ankle-deep in water. "I'm just looking," he explained, feeling the wave's ebb tow at his heels, eroding the sand under his feet—his feet sinking deeper and deeper into the softness as he watched the stampede of stones and

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shells and sea wrack rush headlong back into the ocean. "Ohh!" he gasped, suddenly seeing a piece of green glass among the rubble and snatching it up before the next wave broke. "Look, Roggie. Look! An emerald!"

"You act like it's the first green you ever found. You must have two hundred greens by now."

"No I don't. I have thirty-six—thirty-seven now."

Suddenly, despite the noise of the surf, despite the fact that Daddy was well over a hundred yards away and the wind blowing in his direction, the boys recognized their father's voice, roaring in the distance. Together they turned and saw him standing at the bottom of the stairs that led to the Casino, shaking his fist at Mr. Strauss who was hurriedly mounting the steps. Automatically, Stephen began to gnaw at the cuticle of his thumb. "What is Daddy mad about?"

"Don't ask me," Roggie said, sucking his lower lip and turning away discreetly.

Taking the cue from his brother, Stephen turned away, too, and began to examine the emerald, but his ears remained fixed on his father's voice. None of the words, only the anger was intelligible to Stephen. Listening intently, he looked up from the piece of glass at the ocean. A comber was moving toward the shore, mounting steadily: ten, twelve, twenty-five feet high—or so it seemed to Stephen—a tidal wave like Daddy's voice, looming up, crashing down, splashing his thighs with stinging brine, spattering his face with foam, dragging, dragging at his ankles. But Stephen stood his ground.

"Look! A zeppelin!" Roggie excaimed. Stephen looked up and smiled at the silver cucumber, floating through the sky. "Some day I'm going to fly in one of those."

"Can I come, too?"

"I don't know. We'll see."

"Oh, Roggie, please, please let me come, too."

"We'll see, I said. We'll see how good you are from now on."

"I'll be good. I promise."

"Here comes Daddy."

"Look, Daddy, look," Stephen shouted, pointing at the zeppelin, but Daddy didn't look.

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"Come on, kids," Daddy said, putting his arms around the shoulders of both his sons. "Let's go in. It's getting late."

"Wait a second, Daddy," Stephen said, storing the emerald inside his bathing suit for safe-keeping.

"No one criticizes *my* boys and gets away with it," Daddy went on. "Not while *I'm* alive, they don't . . . careful now, it's kind of rough. Come on, *kleine,* take my hand . . . that-a-boy. Roggie, don't go out too far; better stick near us."

"I'm okay, Dad. It's not *that* rough," Roggie said, stroking and kicking with all his might, trying for Daddy's sake to demonstrate his best form. "Watch me! Watch me!"

"That's very good, Rog. Very good. Just be careful," Daddy said, lifting Stephen in his hands and holding him for one thrilling moment above the crest of a wave.

"Yipeeee!" Stephen screamed. When they got beyond the breakers, Daddy let go of Stephen. With his water wings on, Stephen floated like a bob, and Daddy's head and shoulders broke the surface like a bust resting on a mantel. "Is it over my head?"

"Sure it is."

"Is it over yours?"

"No, sweetheart. I can still touch bottom here. Let's see how well you swim." Stephen lay back lackadaisically, kicked his left leg and flung his right arm out perpendicular to his body. "Come on now, you can do better than that. That's not the way you were taught. Look at Roggie. You remember," Daddy coached. "Stroke, kick, breathe. Stroke, kick, breathe. Just like in the swimming pool."

. . . But the ocean *wasn't* like the swimming pool—everyone knew that!—What made Daddy always say it was? The swimming pool was nothing but a great big box—eight feet deep at one end, two feet at the other—whose water was piped in through a spout and drained off at the sides, whose only sign of life was what you, the swimmer, brought to it. *That* was the all-important difference! In the ocean you didn't need to bother swimming, the ocean did it *for* you. The ocean was alive! . . . "Daddy."

"What, *kleine?*"

"Let's play zeppelin."

"Zeppelin?"

"You know, instead of playing boat."

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"All right," Daddy said, and he submerged obligingly.

Stephen scrambled onto Daddy's broad back and wrapped his arms around Daddy's neck and his legs around his tummy. The contact of their lubricated flesh reminded Stephen of Clarry's soapy hands in the bathtub, and he deliberately wriggled and squirmed and coiled his limbs around Daddy's body. "Mmmmmmmmmm!" Stephen imitated the motor of a zeppelin, as Daddy did the breaststroke. "Faster!" he commanded, and Daddy obeyed, swimming parallel to the shore. In his excitement Stephen forgot about the zeppelin and began to jog up and down on Daddy's back. "Giddyap!"

"Hey! I thought I was a zeppelin," Daddy said, spitting out a mouthful of water.

"No, a horse! A horse!" Stephen squealed, sitting upright and straddling his daddy, holding on to Daddy's bald head with both hands like a stirrup, moving it from right to left, manipulating it like a joystick, like a rudder, like a steering wheel. There, now, between Stephen's thighs, Daddy had become his horse, his plane, his boat, his car, his engine, steaming through the ocean. Almost in a state of rapture, Stephen vised his mount and pounded on its back, as if it were nighttime and he were squeezing and pummeling his pillow.

"Easy, fellow, easy," Daddy cautioned.

Stephen was too enthralled to pay attention. "Mmmmmmmmm-uh!" he exclaimed. The sound articulated and released all the energy and tension, all the exaltation in Stephen's body, but in his delirium he accidentally ducked his father's head. All of a sudden Daddy reared. At the same moment a huge wave swept Stephen off Daddy's back, lifted him up to a dizzying height, dashed him down into the depths, pulled him under and pounced on him with all its weight, winding him and flooding his lungs, rolling him along the bottom, heaving him over stones and cutting shells, dragging him toward drowning death, engulfing him in heavy, hurling, airless, black-death black . . .

When, at last, Stephen recovered consciousness, even before he opened his eyes, he felt someone's hand holding his head, someone's fingers stroking his cheek, and he heard Daddy saying, "Don't be silly, Rog, he isn't dead, he's only winded. There's nothing to cry about. Look! Look! He's opening his eyes. What did I tell you.

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. . . Hello, sweetheart. How do you feel?"

Daddy's face was white as milk; his eyes were big and red and bulging, and his brows were raised. Roggie was crying. The sky was very, very dark. "What time is it?"

"Ten past five."

"I thought it was night."

"That was some mean wave, huh, sweetheart? Thank God you had your water wings on."

"Why did you do that, Daddy?" Stephen asked, blinking his bloodshot eyes.

"What?"

"Drown me."

"Drown you! Me? It was the wave, sweetheart. The wave! It rolled you—all of us! Roggie, too. It's a lucky thing any of us are still alive."

"Hello, Stevie," Roggie snivelled. "How do you feel?"

"Hello, Roggie."

"He's all right," Daddy reassured himself and Roggie. "Aren't you, fellow? Imagine thinking it was *me*!" Stephen reached inside his bathing suit. "What's the matter? What is it, darling? Does something hurt you?" Almost immediately Stephen found what he was looking for—the emerald!—and he smiled and clutched it in his fist. "What is that?"

Stephen was not, as yet, convinced that Daddy *hadn't* tried to drown him, and he didn't feel like revealing his treasure. "Nothing."

"All right, then. Let's go back to the Casino. Mommy'll be worried. You think you can make it, *kleine?*"

"Sure."

Mommy was terribly upset when Stephen reported what had happened. After thanking God it was the last weekend of the summer, she asked Daddy a lot of questions about himself and Bruce, and criticized them both severely. That made Daddy furious, and he began to shout about Mommy playing Mah Jong all the time instead of looking after her children, and Mommy shouted back something about her neurasthenia, and Daddy said he didn't give a good goddamn, it was her responsibility to keep the *kinder* out of trouble, and did she know what had happened with Mr. Strauss

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that very afternoon, whereupon Mommy screamed that Mr. Strauss was a bum, and Daddy screamed that *Mrs.* Strauss was a tramp, and they went on fighting all the way home in the car, until Mommy began to sob, and Stephen squeezed the piece of green glass so tightly it almost cut his palm.

When they reached the house, the first thing Stephen did, as always, was to run to the kitchen to show Clarry the treasure he had found. "My, that's a pretty one, sugar," Clarry smiled. "Lemme see, that makes thirty-six, don't it?"

"Thirty-seven, Clar."

"Thirty-seven! My, my: thirty-seven emeralds. What we need more of now is some sapphires, ain't it, sugar?"

"I know, Clar. But they're awful hard to find."

"Course they hard to find. You don't find precious gems lyin' in the gutter. That's what makes 'em precious. Now, I tell you what, sugar: before we go back to the City next week, you and Clarry is gonna go down to that there beach and scour it until—" Suddenly, hearing Mr. and Mrs. Wolfe upstairs, continuing their fight, Clarrry interrupted herself and asked, "What's the matter with your eyes, sugar? You been cryin'?"

"My eyes?"

"They's all bloodshot," Clarry said, and she stopped sprinkling the calves' liver, and wiped her big floury hands on her apron.

"Oh, I forgot," Stephen exclaimed. "I was drowned."

"What do you mean?" Clarry chuckled. "You was drowned."

"I'm not kidding, Clarry."

"If you was drowned, sugar, you wouldn't be standing here right now."

"I mean it, Clar," Stephen stated earnestly. "Daddy drowned me in the ocean and I was dead for a long time."

Clarry laughed jovially. "Listen, sugar, once you dead, you *stay* dead. They're ain't no comin' back."

"I'm telling you I *was*," Stephen insisted. "Ask Roggie if you don't believe me. Ask anybody!"

"All right, sugar, have it your way. Tell me, how do it feel, bein' dead?"

"It was horrible. I was so scared, Clar," Stephen reported

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weakly, his face contracting with pain. "I don't ever want to die again."

Clara lifted Stephen up and set him down on the sturdy, unpolished, marble-topped table. Now Stephen was on a level with Clarry's compassionate eyes, and he could feel her warm breath against his cheek. "Course not, sugar. And you don't have to. You don't have to. Not whiles Clarry's around. You don't have to worry, sugar," she said, drawing Stephen's head to her shoulder, nestling her soft cheek against his forehead and stroking his hair. "Clarry'll look after you."

Though he could no longer see her eyes, Stephen heard the catch in Clarry's throat, he felt her bosom heave, her strong arms hug him tightly, and he knew that she was crying. "What's the matter, Clar?"

"Nothin,' sugar. Nothin'. Clarry'll look after you."

"Is Rosie dead?"

"Rosie! What's the matter with you, sugar? You know Rosie's in Chicago. I've told you that a hundred times: my baby's in Chicago."

"But if you never see her, isn't that like being dead?"

"Course it ain't. It seem like that sometime," Clarry said, staring straight ahead of her, looking right through Stephen just as if he wasn't there, "like Rosie gone forever, but it ain't. It ain't like that. I dassen't let it be. Come on, now," she continued in her normal tone of voice, returning Stephen to the floor. "You better put that emerald away 'fore it time for dinner."

Stephen ran upstairs. For a moment he stopped to listen outside of Mommy' and Daddy's door, but there wasn't a sound. Realizing that their fight was over, he hurried along to the radiator box in his own room where, much to Mommy's chagrin, Stephen had succeeded in recreating the seashore's smell and sound and texture. Scarcely an inch of the cream-colored radiator lid was left exposed by his multifarious marine collection. Among its many treasures were a dessicated starfish, a perfect pear whelk, the feather of a tern, a piece of driftwood the color of smoke, two withered skate egg cases, the spoored carapace of a calico crab, a blue crab claw, a silver-streaked horse mussel embossed with several barnacles, a kidney-shaped piece of coral, fourteen periwinkles, five ashtray-size clam

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shells, three rough limpets, scallop shells, slipper shells, cockle shells, blue mussels, razor clams and the immaculate remains of a broken sand dollar which had been one of Stephen's most prized possessions before his curiosity got the best of it. Crowded next to these, like the minerals and gems in the Morgan collection at the Museum of Natural History, were the hundred-fifty-odd pieces of surf-sanded colored glass that Stephen had collected over the years—: sapphires from Vicks and Noxzema jars, emeralds, zircons and aquamarines from ale, beer and coca-cola bottles, moonstones from baby oil jars, rose quartz from an unknown source and one rare piece of onyx from a bottle of My Sin.

Before adding it to his collection, Stephen studied the newly-found emerald. Now that it was dry, it began to show tiny deposits of salt in its pores, and its surface felt pleasantly powdery. Held one way, it looked like a piece of candy corn, held another, it became the head of a tomahawk. Compared with the other emeralds, it had a poster-paint quality; it was greener, gaudier, the color of a lime. Placing it was no simple matter. Like a master jeweler creating a lavaliere, Stephen moved it here and there, seeking an aesthetic balance, studying its form and color in relation to the other gems.

As he was doing this, a gust of wind came through the screen and blew the tern feather onto the floor. Stephen picked it up, smoothed its barbs and returned it to its proper place, between the teeth of the blue crab claw. The dogwood tree on the front lawn was being bent to the right so violently, it looked as if it was about to snap. The wind tore off some of its leaves and whirled them upwards. Stephen watched them ascend into the menacing gray-black sky, and wondered when the storm would break. He feared lightning and thunder more than Mommy and Daddy's fights or his own semi-annual visits to Dr. Rosenstrock, the dentist. Almost the first thing he ever did upon entering a stranger's house was to inquire about its lightning rod. The image of the skewered onion planted on a gabled roof was as meaningful to Stephen as the crucifix on her church was to Clarry. He understood nothing about their workings except for the one vital fact that lightning rods kept the fire-bolts away from his body by conducting them into the cellar.

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What fiendish fries ensued down there, Stephen preferred not to think about.

For some reason the storm held off all through dinner and through his bath, so that by the time Stephen was ready for bed he had almost forgotten about it. After Mommy had kissed him goodnight, and the soft but monumental security of Clarry's bosom relinquished him to the dark, Stephen lay in bed musing, as always, over the ocean. He listened to the pounding surf, smelled the brine, and searched for the grains of sand that invariably materialized in his hair, his bellybutton, his bed. He did not question how they came to be there; Stephen knew—knew that he was part of them, the sea and sand, mixed with them, a blend of them the way green is a blend of yellow and blue. As on every other night, before he was able to fall asleep, he had to get out of bed, tip-toe to the radiator and examine his marine collection one more time. He had to seize the whelk and take it back to bed with him and hold it to his ear, uncertain in his somnambulation whether the roaring-rush he listened to emanated from the shell, the ocean or his heart.

At some point in the middle of the night a lightning-crack awakened Stephen to tears. Even without looking, he knew the house had been struck and rent in two. Someone had taken the lightning rod off the roof and stuck it through his open window; some evil executioner, armed with electric currents, was standing in his bedroom, trying to electrocute him. The whole house quaked as the bolts flashed and crackled before his hand-covered eyes and the thunder detonated inside his eardrums and the rain deluged his marine collection. . . . But it wasn't only the rain, it was the ocean, too. The ocean was angry. It had come onto the land, exactly as Clarry had predicted it would. It was just outside his window there, trying to get in, trying to reclaim all the treasures he had stolen—all the shells and gems and creatures. The only way to save them was to shut the window. He had to shut the window! . . . And yet Stephen knew that if he did, if he got out of bed, the evil executioner would spy him and hurl a bolt of fire smack into his face, so he helmeted his head in his pillow and dived under the covers, where, lumped together like a pull of toffee, he eventually cried himself to sleep.

The next morning, when the family came down to breakfast,

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Clara greeted them with a barrage of communiqués. "Miz Wolfe! Miz Wolfe! Disaster! Catastrophe! Worst ever! Five hundred drowned: women 'n children. Right down here, here in our own backyard, right off Seaside! Ocean liner, comin' home from Trinidad: burnin' and drownin'—flames a hundred foot high—"

"The *Conte di Savoia*?" Mommy exclaimed, clapping her hand to her breathless bosom.

"Now, Hattie, don't get hysterical. Your father isn't due back from Europe for another week. Anyway, she said it was coming from Trinidad, not Naples." Daddy turned back to Clarry. "What's its name?"

"Name, Mr. Wolfe?"

"The name of the ship."

"I think the radio man say it called *Tomorrow's Castle.*"

. . . I knew it! Stephen thought. *Tomorrow's Castle* struck by lightning in the night and burning on the beach. Flames a hundred feet high, burning women and children, burning the wall marked WOMEN with children inside: burning—but not the MEN . . . *Tomorrow's Castle* battered by the waves, wearing-it-away waves, washing-it-away waves—all of my constructions drowning and burning in the waves of MEN with children inside . . . "I knew it!" Stephen exclaimed intensely.

"You don't know anything, stupid!" Roggie said in his most superior manner. "As usual, Clara's got it wrong. The name of the ship is the *Morro Castle,* capital M-o-r-r-o, not t-o-m-o-r-r-"

"That's my little professor," Daddy said proudly.

"Oh, I've heard of that! It goes on Caribbean cruises. Thank God it's not the *Savoia,*" Mommy sighed.

"The number of dead is estimated at two hundred-fifty, not five hundred," Roggie continued. "It was coming back from Havana, not Trinidad, and it's anchored off a place called Shark River Inlet, not Seaside. May I have my eggs now?"

"How do you happen to know all that, Roger dear?" Mommy asked, as a deflated Clarry slunk from the room.

"I heard it on the radio before the rest of you were up. Did you think I was telepathetic?" Roggie's insolence made Daddy chuckle.

"Don't be fresh, Roger! And don't you encourage him Saul."

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"Who's encouraging him? I was laughing at his mistake," Saul lied.

"The word is telepathic, darling," Mommy said icily.

"I am *not* stupid!" Stephen growled, making a bulldog face and landing a brutal kick on his brother's shin.

"Damn you!" Roggie shouted, hurling his napkin ring at Stephen's face.

"Roger, don't you dare curse like that in front of me!" Mommy admonished him.

"Stephen, stop that! Put down that napkin ring!" Daddy said.

"But he threw it at *me*!"

"I saw you kick him first," Daddy said.

"He called me stupid."

"Sticks and stones will break my bones—" Roggie chanted.

"Damn you, too!" Stephen yelled, slinging back the napkin ring.

"Did everybody see that?" Roggie asked threateningly, sliding back his chair. "No one can say I started it *this* time!"

"Mommy!" Stephen cried, as Roggie turned the corner of the table, his fist prepared to inflict a series of eggies.

"Sit down, Roger. Roger, sit down!" Mommy shouted, leaping up herself and grabbing Roggie's arm. "Sit down, I said!"

"Here we are," Clarry said, smiling as she pivoted her big body through the swinging door and found herself in the middle of the tug-of-war and spilled the platter of eggs all over the carpet. This made Stephen laugh hysterically, and Clarry's eyes bulged from their sockets like a French bulldog's.

"God damn it!" Daddy roared. "Why the hell don't you watch where you're going?"

Stephen stopped laughing and clenched his fists. "It wasn't Clarry's fault," he said timidly.

"Who asked you? The whole thing's *your* fault in the first place!"

After the eggs were wiped up and a new batch cooked and eaten, Daddy and Roggie retired to the front lawn to have a catch, and Stephen went upstairs to play with his marine collection. He was standing in front of the window holding the whelk to his ear, thinking about the destruction of *Tomorrow's Castle,* and watching Daddy throw the hardball—projecting his arm its full length instead of

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throwing it from the wrist the way he, Stephen, did—when Mommy entered the room.

"What are you doing, sweetheart?" she inquired tenderly.

"Playing."

"You know, my love, we have to think about packing soon. We're going home on Wednesday—remember? You ought to start sorting out your collection."

"Sorting?"

"I mean, for instance, you don't want to take something like this, this old mussel, back to New York, do you?"

"Yes."

"But it smells. So do these devil's purses. Don't you want to leave them here?"

"No."

"All right, darling, do as you like, but find a box to put them in." Harriet smoothed down Stephen's golden hair. "You know, my love, no matter what anyone says, Mommy knows you aren't stupid." Stephen squeezed his mother's hand between his cheek and shoulder, as they watched Roggie dash across the lawn to catch a high throw. But just as the ball was about to nest into his mitt, Clarry appeared on the front steps and he fumbled it.

" 'Scuse me, gentlemens. I just thought his royal highness would like to know the burnin' hulk of the *M-o-r-r-o Castle* is bein' towed toward Sandy Hook."

"What did Clarry say?" Stephen asked.

"Saul, what did Clara just say?" Mommy called through the window.

"I don't know. Something about the *Morro Castle*."

"Pay no attention. She was only taking revenge on me," Roggie said, tossing the retrieved ball back to Daddy.

In the course of the day interest in the fate of the burning vessel intensified. By noon the Seaside Ladies Conservation Committee had rallied its forces and was making a door-to-door collection of rough-wear for the victims of the disaster. Emergency first-aid stations were set up at Point Pleasant and Sea Girt for the care of the survivors suffering from shock. In the afternoon a fisherman in Belmar discovered the body of a drowned woman floating near the shore. All along the Jersey coast solemn crowds gathered in hopes

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of catching a glimpse of the burning luxury liner or any of its passengers—dead or alive. While the Coast Guard combed the sea for casualties and the merchant marine responded to the *Morro Castle's* repeated distress calls, the Governor surveyed the scene from the cockpit of an airplane.

By three o'clock Stephen had finally convinced Mommy to let Clarry take him down to the beach. When they reached the balustrade of the Grand Stairway, Stephen gasped. "Look, Clarry! Look!"

The ocean was like an enormous cauldron of boiling rice: as far as the eye could see, its surface was covered with churning foam. Closer to shore huge walls of dirty green water rose to the height of trees, before crashing onto the beach. The beach itself looked brand new, swept clean, without a sign of human traffic; there wasn't a footprint or a piece of paper anywhere, only the unbroken sandcrust, looking as it must have looked before life became amphibious.

"Mean," Clarry muttered.

"Let's go down!" Stephen urged excitedly.

"Uh-uh, sugar. It too dangerous down there. You get swept away like the *Morro Castle*."

"Where is it, Clar? Where *is* it?"

"Where's what, sugar?"

"Tomorrow's Castle."

"It in someplace called Sandy Hook."

"Where is that?"

"Got me, sugar."

"But I have to see it, Clar. I *have* to."

"Maybe we can see it tomorrow, sugar, when it clears. Come on now, let's go back. It ain't nice down here."

Stephen acquiesced reluctantly. Hand in hand they lagged the long blocks home. On the way he confided to Clarry how the ocean had tried to break into his room the night before.

By five o'clock the flaming *Morro Castle* had broken away from its tow. After drifting several hours, the surf grounded it on a sandbar off Asbury Park. When Stephen heard the news, he refused to go to sleep until he had wrested a promise from Mommy to take him to Asbury the very next day. "And can we play miniature golf?"

"Yes, darling, yes. Now go to sleep."

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As if it were Christmas or his birthday, on Sunday morning Stephen awakened at 5:55, restless with anticipation and excitement: eager to get under way. His room was filled with a fugue of bird-sounds and, gradually, as the day began to dawn, lovely bright sunlight; every trace of Friday night's storm was gone. But by the time the family piled into the Chevrolet—Stephen in the back seat next to Mommy, Roggie up front next to Daddy—it was 11:25 and everyone's nerves were slightly frayed. Because it was Sunday and the weather so good, every car, truck, trailer, bus, motorcycle, bicycle, beach and station wagon within a radius of two hundred miles was on the road, heading for Asbury Park.

For a while, as the Chevy moved along unimpeded by the traffic, the brothers played a lively game of license plates. Stephen spotted one from Tennessee—his favorite state, not because it counted more than any other but because the plate itself was visually onomatopoetic—and one from California which counted fifteen points, and gave him a comfortable lead, until Roggie claimed he saw a foreign plate from a country called British Columbia, which, according to the rules, counted twenty-five. Since Stephen did not see the plate himself and had never heard of the country, he accused his brother of cheating, and the game ended in a fray that required the intervention of both parents.

As they approached Allenhurst the traffic began to jam, making Daddy slow down and stop and stall and start again every other second—something which always angered him. "You and your bright ideas," he grumbled, glaring at Mommy in the rear-view mirror. "I said we should have left right after breakfast. I said—"

"We couldn't leave Clara stranded in church."

"Then we shouldn't've come."

"But we promised the children." Mommy smiled and petted Stephen's head.

"At this rate we'll be lucky if we get there in time to come back." Daddy wrapped his right arm around Roggie's shoulder. "Another one of your mother's brainstorms!"

Stephen studied Daddy's pinky. The straight black hairs looked like mermaid's hair matted under his chunky gold signet ring. "Sit back, darling," Mommy said, laying her hand on Stephen's shoulder. Suddenly her fingers clamped his flesh painfully and

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Mommy gasped. "That's a red light, Saul!" The abrupt stop nauseated Stephen.

"Who's driving this buggy, you or me?"

"You are, Saul."

"Then just sit back and keep quiet—unless you want to walk."

Now that they were standing still, the smoke from Daddy's cigar, mixed with the smell of gasoline and the exhaust from other cars, was sickening. Stephen tried to roll his window lower, but the rear wheel prevented it. Honk! Honk! Honk! He turned around and saw the man in the car behind, honking his horn impatiently. "Roggie, look! It's a Pierce Arrow."

"What's the matter with *you,* you bastard!" Stephen heard Daddy shout. "Can't you see it's red?"

"It's green, Saul," Mommy corrected.

"God damn it! Whose side are you on?" Daddy demanded, as he pulled his head back into the car and stepped on the gas. "That imbecile began to honk before it changed. Or didn't you notice? It's always *my* fault, isn't it? Never the other guy—always me! No matter what happens—"

"I didn't say—"

"Could you get us there any better, brain trust?"

"Don't call me—"

"Then shut up, damn it, just shut up!"

"Don't you dare—"

Stephen sat forward on the seat in an effort to get more air. He watched the orange signs go by and tried to read their message. On the first and second he made out the words *she*, *the* and *by*. On the third and fourth he was able to read *She . . . it was her. . . .* The fifth, of course, he knew at sight: BURMA SHAVE.

"—any more of your god damn lip!" Daddy roared.

Turning away from the window, Stephen saw Mommy squeezed into the opposite corner. She was watching the scenery. At the same time, her white-gloved hand groped blindly for her beaded bag, located it and fished out an embroidered handkerchief. For a moment Stephen smelled her strong gardenia perfume until the heavy cigar smoke overwhelmed its sweet aroma.

"What are you crying about, anyway?" Daddy asked.

"Nothing," Mommy answered, almost voicelessly, her shoulders

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quivering as she raised the handkerchief to her nose. Empathically, Stephen reached towards Mommy's bare, freckled arm and stroked her vaccination. In response Mommy turned around, pressed Stephen's hand endearingly and tried to force a smile, but her chin was as flat and pocked as a cooking pancake, and her mascara trickled down the sides of her nose, silently staining her cheeks.

"Then stop it!" Daddy said.

Mommy turned back toward the window. Stephen could hear her muted whimpering, and the tears welled up in his own eyes. Suddenly Daddy stopped short again, and Stephen gagged, his mouth flooding with saliva. "Daddy!"

"Stop it, I said," Daddy repeated, driving on, "before I really give you something to cry about."

"Daddy!"

"What is it, *kleine*?"

"Will you stop a second? I'm car-sick."

By the time they reached Asbury it was one o'clock. There were seventy-five thousand people there looking at the liner and Daddy had to park eleven blocks away from Sixth Avenue and the Boardwalk, off which the *Morro Castle* was grounded. Because Stephen had been car-sick, Harriet thought he should have some chicken broth, but no one else agreed, so they gulped down hot dogs and pressed toward the Boardwalk. Daddy, running interference for the family, had several verbal battles with strangers along the way but managed by a combination of height and brawn, charm and tyranny, to get within a quarter of a mile of the disabled vessel.

"There it is! There it is!" he shouted. "Will you look at that: still smoking."

"Where? Where? I can't see!" Roggie and Stephen cried in unison.

"Come on, fellow, up you go," Daddy said, hoisting Roggie onto his shoulders.

"Tut! Tut! Tut!" Mommy clucked, seeing the wreck and straining to lift up Stephen by his waist.

"Higher, Mommy! Higher!" Stephen pleaded. "The man's hat's in . . ." But suddenly it was there: the gigantic, red-streaked hulk swerving in the lively surf as if it were on a pivot, its broadside parallel to shore but listing slightly toward the sea, its lifeboats

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all scorched and askew, dangling from their davits, and other fallen rigging hanging down across the rows and rows of portholes, charred and smoking still after thirty hours. . . . *Tomorrow's Castle*: bigger than the whale in the Museum of Natural History, bigger than an apartment house and stronger than an armory, but dying now, lying on its side, coughing smoke and bleeding lead, destroyed and dying in the ocean . . . awful, awful ocean . . . Stephen reached out his hand to console the ship, but Mommy, unable to support his weight any longer, lowered him into the forest of trousered legs.

The next day Stephen begged Mommy to take him back to Asbury Park, but she refused. "You know how car-sick you got yesterday. You know how bad the traffic was. I'll take you to the beach, sweetheart. Maybe you'll be able to see the *Morro Castle* from there."

When they reached the stairhead Stephen looked toward Asbury, and down on the beach below he looked again, but from neither place could he see *Tomorrow's Castle*. To ease his disappointment, Mommy suggested he build something big—a fortress or a castle—so the beach would have something to remember him by when he went away for the winter. Stephen thought Mommy's idea a good one and decided to build the biggest castle in history. He surveyed the sand and chose a spot ten yards from the water's edge. He cleared the site of stones and shells, and set to work carrying handfuls of wet sand up from the water and mixing them with the drier sand, creating a kind of cement. By noon, when Mommy came to take him to lunch, he had amassed a solid block of sand the size of a steamer trunk.

"Oh Mommy, I can't stop now. Can't you bring me back a sandwich?"

"But isn't it finished, darling? It looks finished to me."

"Oh no! I have to put the turrets on. I have to build the wall. I have to dig the moat."

When Mommy returned with his lunch, Stephen was still working feverishly, setting jagged fragments of shells around the perimeter of his castle's roof. He could scarcely spare the time to gobble down his sandwich before he began to build the walls. Harriet turned her backrest toward the sun and watched Stephen as he scurried to and from the waterfront, carrying scoops of dripping

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sand—doing in a single day and alone the labor an army of Egyptians at Giza had taken several generations to complete. Had it been earlier in the summer, he would by now have attracted an audience of envious children and grown-ups to watch him consummate his colossus, but on this September afternoon there was almost no one on the beach. Stephen was glad. He didn't need or even want an audience to urge him on. He wasn't building it for *them*. He was building it for himself, this mausoleum—for himself and those women and children who had died aboard *Tomorrow's Castle;* he was building it as a monument to them and as a resurrection of the ship itself, to stand against the ocean. No wave in all the Atlantic was big enough or brave enough to trespass this far up the sand; even if there were, he would see to it his walls were thick enough to repulse the worst assault. . . . I must make them higher, I must reinforce them, he thought, anxiously glancing at the sun to see how much time he had left.

At half-past four, long after Mommy had called to say they must be going soon, Stephen was down at the water's edge on one of his countless missions to collect wet sand, when something in the water distracted him. At first he couldn't even distinguish the shape as it floated there a foot or two beneath the surface. The only fact he felt fairly certain about was that the thing was white. A fish, he thought, but dead and floating on its back. He watched with fascination as the tide brought the fish's underbelly closer to the shore. No, it's like that thing underneath a cow where the milk comes out, he thought, as he began to discern four inflated upright fingers. Fingers! All of a sudden his heart beat uncontrollably, his flesh tingled, and he lost his sense of hearing as he breathed the one word "hand." . . . It's a hand, he thought, unable to move. A hand! A hand! A woman's hand, and he plunged into the ocean.

"Stevie! Stevie! What are you doing? It's much too cold!" Harriet shouted, leaving her backrest and hurrying toward her son. "What's the matter with you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Come out of there before you catch pneumonia!" she scolded.

"Ohhh, Mommy—"

"You heard what I said, come out of there this instant!"

"Ohhh, Mommy—"

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"I'm going to tell your father on you and you know what'll happen then."

"But Mommy," Stephen conspired, "I found a hand."

"What? What on earth are you talking about? Come out of there, I said!" This time Stephen obeyed and began to emerge from the ocean, holding the white hand by its wrist. When Mommy saw it she shrieked and covered her eyes.

"Shhh, Shhh," Stephen said, not wanting anyone to overhear or see them.

"What is it?" she asked in pain.

"A hand," he confided, still holding the dripping thing.

"Oh you're awful! Simply awful!" Mommy said, after she uncovered her eyes. "You're worse than your brother, to play a trick like that on me! Throw that stupid glove away!" she said, more annoyed than relieved.

"It's a hand."

"It is *not* a hand! It's a glove. And I'll thank you not to scare me like that ever again."

At last Stephen examined his catch. . . . Mommy was right, it *was* a glove, a woman's white cotton glove exactly like the ones Mommy wore. Anyone could see that, now that the water had drained out of it, leaving it hanging there, limp, between his fingertips. But what in the world was a woman's glove doing in the ocean?

Harriet was just as troubled by the question as Stephen. She thought about the Lindbergh baby. She thought about the dirigible—what was its name?—that had crashed a couple of years ago, killing seventy-five boys—the *Akron*!—off this very coast. "Oh how silly of me," she said, ejecting her pent-up breath as she realized the truth of the matter. "It's from the *Morro Castle*."

. . . *Tomorrow's Castle* . . . Stephen hurriedly turned to look at his construction It was still intact, untouched by the tide.

"It must have belonged to one of the passengers. How terrible . . . terrible," Harriet said, wondering whether she ought not to keep the glove and turn it in to the authorities. "No. Throw it back, dear, throw it back, and let's go home. We're late enough as is."

With all his strength Stephen hurled the glove back into the ocean, but it didn't travel very far. As he watched it sink out of sight, it turned into a hand again.

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The following day, the last Stephen spent in Seaside, Mommy and Clarry were up at dawn. He could hear them clattering in the kitchen. After breakfast Mommy said, "Clara and I have a lot of work to do today. Do you think you can play by yourself? . . . Or with your brother?" she added as an afterthought.

"But I have to go down to the beach and say goodbye to my castle," Stephen said.

"That's all right, if Roger'll go with you. Otherwise, I want you to stay around the house. Oh! and find a shoebox for those shells and things. I don't want to have to be worrying about them at the last minute."

Stephen knew, before he asked, that Roggie would refuse to take him to the beach, so he put on his bathing suit, sneaked out of the house, and went by himself, running all the way. When he got to the stairhead, he looked for his castle, but he couldn't see it. He rushed down the steps toward the spot where he had worked all the previous day, but the spot had disappeared. Both the castle and the sand on which it stood had disappeared. Half the beach in fact had disappeared, and Stephen was frantic. He knew he had built it to the right of the stairhead, and he searched farther and farther south but found nothing. He retraced his steps and ran toward the cliffs—back and forth between the ocean and the cliffs—but found nothing. Finally, at the water's edge, he discovered the ocean lapping at a little gray amorphous mound of sand and recognized the bits of seashell he had used for turrets. He sat down beside the shapeless ruin, supporting his chin in his hands, but he couldn't cry. It demanded something more than that, the ocean, more than tears, he thought. . . . Maybe once a woman wept the ocean and then it turned into a man. . . .

Suddenly, not five feet from his toes, creeping up the pebbles, he saw that hand again, the hand of the woman who had drowned aboard *Tomorrow's Castle*. . . . So it wasn't a glove after all. It couldn't be! It was still alive, trying again and again to crawl out of the ocean, but the tide refused to let it. That was the trouble with the ocean: it wouldn't let go of your hand—even after it had eaten your entire body.

Stephen raised his head and gazed out to sea, where the ocean seemed to overflow into the horizon. He looked at the

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shifting whitecaps. He singled out a special wave and tried to observe its progress as it traveled toward the shore, but half way in it drowned or got mixed up with another wave, and he lost sight of it. He tried again, but the same thing happened, until finally he settled for watching the general movement of the incoming tide. He watched it crash on the beach in front of him and eat away the sand beyond the spot on which he sat. He watched it ebb back into itself, taking with it yet another portion of his already unrecognizable castle. . . . Tomorrow there won't even be a trace of it, he thought. By tomorrow the ocean will have taken all of it, even the turrets, giving me back in exchange a broken shell, a blue crab claw, a little piece of coral—all sorts of unfair things! Nothing like a seahorse or an ocean liner. No! That would be too valuable. The most I can expect is a dead or dying fish . . . a woman's hand. . . . "But where's her body?" Stephen cried aloud. "What have you done with her body?"

The tide had reached its flow now, and Stephen was sitting up to his waist in water. Feeling it caress his limbs, Stephen had to weewee. Cautiously he glanced up and down the beach. There wasn't a soul in sight, not even Bruce; the summer was over. As it flooded out of him, his weewee hot against his thighs, Stephen felt a great release. He loved the idea of sitting there in his own water, mixing his own water with the ocean's, mixing the ocean with himself. How many times had Mommy said "You'll turn into a fish"? Well, now at last the time had come. . . . Who cares? he thought, lying back and letting the tide tow him into the sea. Who cares about the things on shore? . . . As if he were going to sleep, Stephen shut his eyes deliberately. Deliberately he abandoned his resistance. He longed to be unconscious now, longed to leave the world behind and turn into a fish. More than anything, he longed for the ocean to work its will and ravage him the way it had ravaged *Tomorrow's Castle* until there was nothing left of him but a little brittle fingernail lying on the sand. . . . Who cares about those dead and broken things when there is this—the turbulence, the touching! . . . "Goodbye, Clarry! Goodbye, Mommy!" Stephen cried as he drifted out to sea. "I love you, ocean, love you!" he confessed, feeling the water under him.

Stephen's lover responded vigorously, pulling him down, rolling

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him over, spilling him out onto the sand. Stephen paid no attention. As soon as he had wiped his eyes, he scrambled to his feet again and ran back into the water, abandoning himself like something inert until his lover tossed him out a second time. . . . It's like a game, he thought, lying on the cold soft sand. . . . No matter how many times the ocean kicks you out, the sand is always there to welcome you, dead or alive, and to give you back again, until the ocean's had a chance to tear you into little pieces and turn the pieces into sand—until the sand itself is eaten by the ocean, and the land becomes the sand, and there are no more houses anywhere, and no more people left on earth . . .

After surrendering himself for the third time, Stephen staggered to his feet and stumbled out of the water. He was exhausted and exhilarated. He filled his lungs with the clean sharp air. He stood and stared up at the Casino perched on top of the cliffs. For a moment he remembered the wall marked MEN and the wall marked WOMEN. He almost toppled over as he threw back his head and gazed into the sky. . . . Mommy is the land, he thought, Daddy is the ocean. "No, that's not right," he said aloud. "*I'm* the land and Roggie's the ocean." No, somehow that wasn't right either, and Stephen mulled it over in his head and made it into jingles as he straggled home:

"Daddy is the ocean,
Mommy is the land.
Roggie is the ocean,
Stevie is the sand.
Stevie is the ocean,
Daddy is the land.
Mommy is the ocean,
Roggie is the sand . . ."

That night, before he went to sleep, Mommy questioned Stephen about his marine collection. "What's the matter with you darling? I thought I asked you to pack these awful shells and things. That's not like you, to disobey me."

Stephen propped himself on his elbow and deliberated for a moment. "I don't think I'll take them with me."

"What?"

"I think I'll leave them here."

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"Oh, thank goodness! That's my angel child," Mommy said, switching off the light and leaving the room.

In the dark, Stephen lay down in bed and lullabied himself to sleep:

"Daddy is the ocean,
Mommy is the land.
Roggie is the ocean,
Stevie is the sand . . ."

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Eugene Goodheart

LAWRENCE AND CHRIST

In recent years Lawrence has been made to serve causes not of his own choosing, notably the moral tradition of the English novel and more recently Christianity. The impetus for the remaking of Lawrence was initially provided by T. S. Eliot's attack on Lawrence in *After Strange Gods* in which Eliot found the son of a Welsh coal miner heretical and sinister, the inevitable result of a deficiency in the kind of tradition that a good education gives. F. R. Leavis, coming to Lawrence's defense, argued insistently (sometimes impressively, often extravagantly) for Lawrence's place in "the great tradition" of the English novel. Lawrence has been seen in relation to other worthy traditions. For instance, in one view, he is the last great writer who embodies the attack on machinery which began in England with Wordsworth and become so pervasive a theme in Victorian literature that Pater, surveying the whole of poetry, could define "all great poetry" as "a continual protest" against "the predominance of machinery." There are real provocations for seeing Lawrence as traditional and moral. If one reads *The Rainbow* for its depiction of English country life, one is impressed with Lawrence's resemblance to the George Eliot of *Adam Bede*. The essay "Democracy," read without reference to his other works, yields a social and morally earnest Lawrence not unlike the Carlyle of "Signs of the Times." These views, however, have the unfortunate effect of domesticating Lawrence by neutralizing his subversiveness.

A particularly interesting instance of this is a recent tendency in the criticism of Lawrence to stress his kinship with Christianity. There is, to be sure, some evidence for this view. Toward the end

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of his career, Lawrence evinced an admiration for the pagan element in the Catholic Church and was even hopeful about the regeneration of Christianity as an active religious force. Moreover, Lawrence's attraction to the figure of Jesus was deep and abiding, and *The Man Who Died,* despite the elements of parody and satire that it contains is a significant (and in certain ways) reverent recreation of the Christ story. Lawrence's affection for the resurrection idea alone would seem to provide a ground for asserting his kinship with Christianity. One critic suggests that Lawrence may have been working all along toward a Christian view of things and calls Lawrence "almost a Christian."

All this, of course, is to ignore the fact that the essential animus of his work is averse to Christianity. If he celebrates the resurrection, he reminds us in *Apocalypse* that the resurrection theme is prominent in pre-Christian religions. Indeed, Christianity involves the transcendence of the idea of resurrection. Man is to rise to a place in the eternal scheme of things never to rise again. For Lawrence the rhythm of death and rebirth is an eternal rhythm which can never be transcended so long as there is life. Lawrence, consequently, loathed the idea of immortality. Even more crucial to Lawrence's view of Christianity is his peculiar appropriation of the idea of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost, according to Lawrence, is that capacity within man which "can scent the new tracks of the Great God across the Cosmos or Creation." It is not a Way or a Word; it is rather the eternal capacity in man to discover the Way and the Word at every moment of his quest. Lawrence writes:

> . . . never did God or Jesus say there was only one way of salvation, for ever and ever. On the contrary, Jesus plainly indicated the changing of the way. And what is more, He indicated the only means to the finding of the right way.

Lawrence appropriates the idea of the Holy Ghost precisely to free himself from a commitment to Christianity. He separates Christ from Christianity, and it is this separation that has given him the freedom to pursue God in his own way. Nietzsche (in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*) provides us with a motto for understanding Lawrence's version of the Christ story in *The Man Who Died.* "He died too

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early; he himself would have recanted his teaching had he reached my age. Noble enough was he to recant."

The Man Who Died begins on an ironic note. Lawrence's Christ is miraculously recalled to life by a "loud and splitting" cock crow. Pained and disillusioned, he discovers that the world he tried to deny for the illusory glory of eternal life has its own undying glory. "The world, the same as ever the natural world, thronging with greenness, a nightingale singing winsomely, wistfully, coaxingly calling from the bushes beside a runnel of water, in the world, the natural world of morning and evening, forever undying, from which he had died."

With his keen religious intuition, Lawrence has perceived the religious heresy of the Christian impulse toward self-transcendence. By trying to exceed the reach of his hands and feet in order to achieve communion with God, man is separated from God and diminished in the separation. The nausea, emptiness and disillusion that the man suffers are the punishments that Lawrence imagines for the sacrilege. Lawrence is presenting in a new way the old paradox of the Christian critique of the Renaissance conception of man: that the centering of the universe around man results in a diminution of his stature. As Lawrence exploits the paradox, however, man in his full splendor and potency is conceived according to the Renaissance model. For Lawrence, as for every religious writer, the imagination of divinity and the imagination of the self are inextricably bound together. Karl Jaspers, the Christian Existentialist, remarks that the question " 'what is man?' must be complemented by the essential question whether and what Transcendence (Deity) is." As the imagination of divinity fails so does the imagination of the self. Lawrence's loathing of modern literature derives in part from a feeling that it offers us the spectacle of small selves in a godless universe, attempting to achieve significance through a psychological magnification of their most trivial feelings. (". . . it is self-consciousness, picked into such fine bits that the bits are most of them invisible, and you have to go by the smell. Through thousands and thousands of pages Mr. Joyce and Mrs. Richardson tear themselves to pieces, strip their emotions to the finest threads.")

The effect of Lawrence's contempt for what he called "the

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idiotic footrule" that "man is the measure of the universe" is often a kind of misanthropy. In *The Man Who Died* the repudiation of Christ's mission to convert men to the God of Love ("to lay the compulsion of love on all men") is accompanied by an intense hatred of the City of Man.

> So he went his way, and was alone. But the way of the world was past belief, as he saw the strange entanglement of passions and circumstance and compulsion everywhere, but always the dread insomnia of compulsion. It was fear, the ultimate fear of death, that made men mad. So always he must move on, for if he stayed, his neighbors wound the strangling of their fear and bullying around him. There was nothing he could touch, for all, in a mad assertion of ego, wanted to put a compulsion on him, and violate his intrinsic solitude. It was the mania of cities and societies and hosts, to lay a compulsion upon a man, upon all men. For men and women alike are mad with the egoistic fear of their own nothingness.

We are reminded in the above passage of Lawrence's kinship with other misanthropes: Swift and Nietzsche, for example. The misanthropy is connected with Lawrence's attraction to the "inhuman" and the "impersonal": Lawrence's characters seek to transcend the human world of circumstance and compulsion in order to enter the other world of cosmic energy, what Lawrence calls in *The Man Who Died* "the greater life of the body." At the end of *Apocalypse* Lawrence unmistakably indicates the cosmic character of the greater life of the body.

> We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos. I am part of the sun as my eye is part of me. That I am part of the earth my feet know perfectly, and my blood is part of the sea. My soul knows that I am part of the human race, my soul is an organic part of the great human soul, as my spirit is part of my nation. In my own very self, I am part of my family. There is nothing of me that is alone and absolute except my mind, and we shall find that the mind has no existence by itself, it is only the glitter of the sun on the surface of the waters.

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In order to see what is involved in moving from the little human world to the greater world of the body, we should turn to *Women in Love,* his richest if not his most successful novel, in which we are given a striking demonstration of his imagination of transcendence.

As critics have pointed out, the relationship between Birkin and Ursula is intended to represent the expansion and realization of vitalities in them, while the relationship between Gudrun and Gerald develops, in contrast, toward catastrophe and death. The love of Birkin and Ursula, however, is successful only by contrast with the disastrous connection between Gerald and Gudrun, for if we ignore the counterpointing of the two relationships and consider simply the evolution of Birkin in the novel, then the "fulfillment" of his relationship with Ursula seems a rather dubious affair. What characterizes Birkin's action throughout the novel is a search for transcendent states of being, and that search draws him away from women, not toward them. Thus Birkin's desire to break free from Hermione cannot be explained exclusively as a recoil from the predatory female. To be sure, Hermione in her awful willfulness is an enemy of life and spontaneity, and Birkin's flight from her is the necessary act of self-preservation. But Birkin's suspicion of Hermione remains a constant posture in Birkin which determines his relations with Ursula. Again Birkin's violent and suspicious behavior toward Ursula cannot be explained as merely the suspiciousness of a man who has been burnt badly by a particularly noxious female. His recoil from her is a recoil from the "eternal feminine," and this is graphically illustrated by the episode in which Birkin tries to destroy the reflection of the moon upon the water. The image, of course, is indestructible, and Birkin's anger finally releases his passion for Ursula. The "mystic" consummation in darkness, however, is short-lived, and the battle goes on between them.

If we consider the consummation itself, or the "love-ethic" that Lawrence attaches to it, we can perhaps begin to appreciate the extent of Birkin's recoil from the act of love. The merging of identities—what the Elizabethans called "the little death"—is passionately repudiated by Birkin. Instead the act of love becomes a male-female polarity—or in one of Lawrence's metaphors "a star equilibrium"—in which the separate identities of the lovers are maintained even at the moment of consummation. Even Ursula,

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who insists at the end of the novel that Birkin is her whole life, rejects love as an ideal. Ursula makes the rejection in an argument with Gudrun toward the end of the novel.

> . . . Love is too human and little. I believe in something inhuman of which love is only a part. I believe that what we must fulfill comes out of the unknown to us, and it is something infinitely more than love. It isn't so merely human.

Given Ursula's statement that Birkin is enough for her—"I don't want anybody else but you"—Ursula's little speech to Gundrun seems like a justification of Birkin's life, not her own. It is as if Lawrence wanted a confirming statement from Ursula to vindicate Birkin's actions to the reader.

The suspicious critic, oriented to psychoanalysis, sees in this rejection of love and of Woman a concealment of "a fear in Birkin, perhaps as deep as, or deeper than, his longing for Ursula."[1] The critic has only to invoke in support of this view Birkin's strange relationship with Gerald, particularly as it is expressed in the homoerotic wrestling episode and the peculiar note of discontent on which the novel ends, in which Birkin expresses his desire for "eternal union with a man." Birkin, from this point of view, suffers from a homosexual fear of women.

That there is something in this view can be denied only by one whose commitment to the Laurentian ethos is fanatical. But the homosexual impulse in Birkin is inadequate to explain the *experience* that is gained by a rejection of a love all "too human and little"—that experience of the "unknown" of which the passionate embraces of Birkin and Ursula do give us a glimpse and of which there is an intimation in Birkin's speculations, occasioned by his viewing of an elegant sculptured figure from West Africa, in which he speaks of the African "process" as a "further sensual experience—something deeper, darker, than ordinary life can give." Birkin earlier described the African way as "pure culture in sensation, culture in the physical consciousness, mindless, utterly sensual."

1. See Eliseo Vivas, D. H. Lawrence: *The Failure and Triumph of Art* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1960), pp. 255-272. His critical tact, perhaps a trifle overscrupulous, prevents Vivas from stating this outright, but his implication is unmistakable.

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Birkin rejects the African way because it involves dreadful mysteries beyond the phallic cult. He asks himself, "How far in their inverted culture, had these West Africans gone beyond phallic knowledge?" And in imagining the distance—"the goodness, the holiness, the desire for creation must have lapsed"—Birkin recoils in fear from it.

The mysteries from which he recoils are doubtless Dionysian mysteries, the marvelous and terrible experience in which man is "led back to the very heart of nature." In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche understood this experience as a moment when "the state and society, and, in general, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature." Elsewhere he characterizes the Dionysian festival as a time when "all of Nature's excess in joy, sorrow and knowledge become audible, even in piercing shrieks." Lawrence's instinct warned him that the consequence of an unmediated return to nature may be, in Nietzsche's words, an "abyss of annhilation." (*The Woman Who Rode Away,* for instance, can be read as a kind of cautionary tale about the risks of the Dionysian.) But despite the fear of being devoured by the experience, Lawrence's heroes constantly court it. We find the fascination with the Dionysian in the following passage from *The Woman Who Rode Away*:

> Only the eyes of the oldest were not anxious. Black and fixed, and as if sightless they watched the sun, seeing beyond the sun. And in their black, empty concentration there was power, power intensely abstract and remote, but deep, deep to the heart of the earth, and the heart of the sun. In absolute motionlessness he watched till the red sun should send his ray through the column of ice. Then the old man would strike, and strike home, accomplish the sacrifice and achieve the power.

In Lawrence's "Study of Thomas Hardy" there is a remarkably vivid description of this state of being.

> . . . I wish we were all like kindled bonfires on the edge of space, marking out the advance-posts. What is the aim of self-preservation, but to carry us right to the firing line; there what *is* is in contact with what is not. If many lives be lost by the way, it cannot be helped, nor if much suffering

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> be entailed. I do not go out to war in the intention of avoiding all danger or discomfort: I go to fight for myself. Every step I move forward into being brings a newer, juster proportion into the world, gives me less need of storehouse and barn, allows me to leave all and to take what I want by the way, sure it will always be there; allows me in the end to fly the flag of myself, at the extreme tip of life.

What Lawrence and his heroes desire—and it is implicit in the passages quoted above and in numerous descriptions of the sexual act at the moment of consummation (e.g. "he felt as if he were seated in immemorial potency")—is to be, as it were, the point at which all the energies of the universe converge and where they can experience them incarnate in their beings as sheer *power*. The experience, from which Birkin recoiled in his speculations about the inverted culture of the "African way," holds the secret of power which the Laurentian hero desires to possess.

In his book *Christ and Nietzsche,* G. Wilson Knight remarks that the self in becoming one with the cosmos achieves an hermaphroditic unity in which it engages in a kind of sexual intercourse with itself. Knight, following Nietzsche, suggests an analogue for this state of being in the creative act itself. What is involved is a passive (feminine) receptivity to the inspirational Dionysian flow into consciousness and an active (masculine) exertion of the Apollonian will to make order, significance and beauty.

Only a deliberate insensitivity to Lawrence's imagination of transcendence could produce the statement of one critic that the difference between the Laurentian idea and the Christian "is not ineradicable. Whether man receives the sacred flow of life which God has given him, and remains thankful for that, or whether man transcends his finite self, to participate in the God-stuff, the ultimate effect is the same."[2] It is precisely Lawrence's point that this difference makes all the difference in the universe.

> . . . To pretend that all is one stream is to cause chaos and nullity. To pretend to express one stream in terms of another, so as to identify the two, is false and sentimental.

2. Mark Spilka, *The Love of Ethic of D. H. Lawrence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957), p. 217.

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The idea of the immanence of deity in the body (in the individual body as well as the body of the universe) is a powerful idea, and it keeps its power only if its meaning is not reduced to an idea which is really its opposite. To blur the distinction is to do what a great deal of the criticism of Lawrence has tried to do: it is to domesticate the tiger.

The action of *The Man Who Died* is the painful recovery of the God in the body, which culminates in the man's passionate embrace of the priestess of Isis. The fierce and raging physical life that had earlier seemed resistant and defiant now responds to their passion.

> . . . All changed, the blossom of the universe changed its petals and swung round to look another way. The spring was fulfilled, a contact was established, the man and the woman were fulfilled of one another.

Significantly, the priestess of Isis is abandoned at the end of *The Man Who Died,* having fulfilled her role as the conduit to the mysteries of "the greater life of the body."

If Lawrence is averse to Christianity, there remains nonetheless his deep attraction to the figure of Christ. Lawrence's Christ retains the chastity, the purity of soul that marks the Christ of the gospels. Before his embrace of the priestess of Isis there had been a long and difficult "rebirth," in which the man had learned "the irrevocable *noli me tangere* which separates the reborn from the vulgar." Like the heroes of Lawrence's other novels, the man who dies must resist the lure of false self-diminishing connections; in reliving his old experiences with "humanity," with Madeleine, with Judas, he undergoes a kind of purification.

It is hard not to read *The Man Who Died* as, in one sense, an allegory on Lawrence himself. The man's speech to Madeleine, for instance, unmistakably registers a personal note.

> But my mission is over, and my teaching is finished and death has saved me from my own salvation. Oh Madeleine, I want to take my single way in life, which is my portion. My public life is over, the life of my self-importance.

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One cannot avoid having in mind the frail red bearded writer with the messianic vision. Lawrence here rejects not only Christ's particular mission, but also the self-created legend that had its absurd apotheosis in the notorious "last supper" at the Café Royale. If he assumed the messianic role, he soon learned its bitter fruits. There were plenty of Judases within his own circle, and like the man of the Christ story, Lawrence learned how much he himself was responsible for the betrayals he had suffered. We were given anticipations in his letters of his abdication of the messianic role; admissions that his doctrine of spontaneity and individual being was compromised by the categorical imperatives that he was constantly issuing. In a letter to Lady Cynthia Asquith, Lawrence admits his own impulse to lay compulsions upon other people—to dictate *his* spontaneous feelings to others.

> And never again will I say, generally, "the war"; only "the war to me." For to every man the war is himself, and I cannot dictate what the war is or should be to any other being than myself. Therefore I am sorry for all my generalities, which must be falsities to another man, almost insults. Even Rupert Brooke's sonnets which I repudiate for myself, I know how true it is for him, for them.

For Lawrence the creative life cannot develop except in a condition of privacy and aloneness, and he often urged others to that condition of true solitude in which a man could obey his own deepest creative impulse.

> Shelter yourself above all from the world, save yourself, screen and hide yourself, so subtly in retreat, where no one knows you . . . hiding like a bird, and living busily the other creative life, like a bird building a nest.

Like Christ, Lawrence chose the single way, and though he was tempted in his loneliness onto the false paths of society and politics, he remained essentially loyal to the single way. In Karl Jaspers' characterization of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche we may get a glimpse of the significance of Lawrence's loneliness.

> . . . With them, a new form of reality appears in history. They are, so to speak, representative destinies, sacrifices whose

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> way out of the world leads to experiences for others. They are by the total staking of their whole natures like modern martyrs, which, however, they precisely denied being. Through their character as exceptions, they solved their problem.
>
> Both are irreplaceable, as having dared to be shipwrecked. We orient ourselves by them. Through them we have intimations of something we could never have perceived without such sacrifices, of something that seems essential which even today we cannot adequately grasp. It is as if the Truth itself spoke, bringing an unrest into the depths of our consciousness of being.

The characters of whom Jaspers speaks must enact their destiny no matter what the risks may be, and that destiny is to remain faithful to a vision which may defy what Lawrence called "the little fold of law and order." The greatest of these characters was Christ himself (Jaspers' insistence on the uniqueness of the modern "martyrs" notwithstanding). If Christ comes to fulfill the law, he also comes to destroy the version of the law—whatever it may be—that prevails in the world. Blake, for instance, makes this the central fact of Jesus' career when he invokes him as an ally in his war against the life-killing rules that govern the human spirit.

> I tell you, no virtue can exist without breaking these ten commandments. Jesus was all virtue, and acted from impulse, not from rules.

And Dostoevsky's Christ brings the gift of complete spiritual freedom, because the Church that bears His Name has taken it away from mankind in exchange for mystery, miracle and authority. The opposition between Christ and law in its worldly embodiment is the opposition between vital spirit and dead matter, between freedom and coercion, spontaneity and compulsion. If it is the nature of the world to turn energy into matter, power into weakness, the spirit into the word, then Christ exists as the permanent possibility of the renewal of energy, power and spirit. Though he has no permanent abode in the world, there is always the possibility of his return.

From this point of view even Nietzsche, the great "Anti-Christ" of modern culture is, as G. Wilson Knight has pointed out, "analog-

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ous to Christ himself in (Christ's) challenge against the rigidity of Judaic Law." Knight has very brilliantly argued for the Dionysian or power content of Christ's doctrine as opposed to the Christian doctrine. Thus he distinguishes between the inclusive "super-sexuality" of Christ and "the ghostly, bloodless, nasalised and utterly unsexual . . . tone of our Church tradition." Jesus's dread of the crowd, his impulse to solitude, and the pain and joy of the crucifixion and resurrection are regarded by Knight as the Dionysian involvement with the cosmos that carries the self beyond the "normal" sensual experience of the world into an hermaphroditic oneness of the self with the universe, of the self with the self. Christ's love is not altruism, but self-renewal. Viewed from this "higher critical" position, *The Man Who Died* is a significant retelling of the story within the tradition. Nietzsche himself would have disagreed with Knight's conception of Christ. But his admiration for Jesus was genuine, and he was careful to distinguish him from contemporary Christianity as well as from the creeds.

Lawrence's version of the Christ story, in which the man separates himself from the vulgar after he descends from the cross, is a repudiation of something central in the *Christian* ethos. Lawrence has seen through the willed and enervating democratic character of Christianity and rejected it for a fierce aristocratic aloneness. Whatever ultimate significance the life of Jesus had, Christianity for writers like Blake, Nietzsche, and Lawrence had come to be an enemy of life, and the attempts of commentators and critics to reconcile them to Christianity on some higher ground have the effect of depriving them of the weapon that Jesus himself was permitted: the sword. Lawrence came with the sword. His message was not peace and reconciliation, but destruction and recreation. The gentle Jesus who embodied the hopes and aspirations of the meek and poor (the Jesus of Christianity) is an alien spirit to Lawrence.

In an introduction that Lawrence wrote to Dostoevsky's version of the Christ story, the un-Christian and aristocratic power bias of Lawrence's imagination is revealed in an extraordinary way. In summarizing the argument of the Grand Inquisitor, Lawrence makes his characteristic effort to rescue the tale from the artist. According to Lawrence, Christ's kiss, which is paralleled in the

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Karamazov story by the kiss that Ivan receives from Alyosha, is a kiss of acquiescence in the rightness of the Grand Inquisitor's argument. "Ivan had made a rediscovery of a truth that had been lost since the eighteenth century." The truth, which puts the lie to the enlightenment belief in the perfectibility of all men, is that the burden of freedom can be endured only by the gifted, unhappy few who must assume the burden for all mankind. Lawrence very shrewdly observes that the Grand Inquisitor's argument is close to the Christian idea of a single man supremely endowed, assuming the burden for all of mankind. But we are kept from seeing the resemblance by the dramatic situation, the "cynical Satanical" pose that the Grand Inquisitor is made to affect. He is supposedly in league with the Devil, and the fact that "the wise (humane) old man" has put on the garb of the terrible Inquisitor of the auto-da-fe distracts us from the wisdom and the humanity of his argument.

Lawernce turns the Grand Inquisitor's argument into a justification of his mistrust of what Nietzsche called the herd and of the necessity of protecting the freedom and power of the few from the presumption that all men are capable of perfection.

> So let the specially gifted few make the decision between good and evil and establish the life values against the money values. And let the many accept the decision, with gratitude, and bow down to the few, in the hierarchy.

It is, of course, a curious fact that Lawrence sides with the Grand Inquisitor against Christ. There is throughout Lawrence's work a fear that the doctrine of spontaneity and freedom will be perverted by those for whom freedom is an excuse for self-indulgence and the coercion of others. Lawrence's willingness to send Dostoevsky's Christ away is a salutary warning to his readers of the danger that his own work embodies. His misanthropy, paradoxically, keeps him from wanting his doctrine to become the property of all men. Lawrence's "political period" immediately preceding *The Man Who Died* was very instructive in this respect. The hero of *Kangaroo*, for instance, learns that he must repudiate political connections that will violate his singleness. There is a qualifying humility in Lawrence (a consequence of his religious character perhaps) which keeps him from sharing Blake's and Nietzsche's belief in the power of men

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(even the best of them) to transcend themselves infinitely. Lawrence mistrusted what Mark Schorer has called (writing of Blake) the politics of vision. His respect for human limitations counteracted somewhat the anarchic Dionysian tendency of his imagination. His work at moments seems a balance of opposing tendencies, and this balance gives the impression of health and normality, which critics like F. R. Leavis make so much of. Even in Lawrence's fierce repudiations and self-affirmations, the imagination of distinction, relation, balance and hierarchic order often appears. Nevertheless, Lawrence is essentially like Blake and Nietzsche in his address to the untapped powers of man and his hatred of the rules and forms that curb those powers.

Lawrence is neither a "normative" writer, judging from some conventional standard of health or vitality, nor is he, for that matter, a perverse writer, revelling in a fantasy that defies or deviates from the norms of civilization. Like Blake and Nietzsche before him, Lawrence has managed to see and judge the quality of life (its norms and its perversities) from a vantage point outside of civilization. Such a statement is, of course, meaningless to those who deny the existence of such a vantage point. Denis de Rougemont, for instance, remarks in *Love in the Western World*: "To plunge down below our moral rules is . . . not to abolish their restraints, but merely to indulge in more than animal insanity. The mistake lies in supposing that 'the real thing,' the longing for which has now become an obsession is there to be found." As a *caveat* against the glorification of instinct, this statement is valuable, but as a theoretical statement about human possibility it seems to me presumptuous and unacceptable. To regard the moral rules as absolutes against which there is no radical appeal is both to indulge in the humanistic presumption that this is the best of all possible worlds and to invalidate *a priori* any radical criticism of the norms of a civilization. It is to reject as valueless the visionary genius.

Lawrence's mistake was to confuse the visionary and the ethical. His vision of life finally should not be taken as a guide to conduct, the hortatory, preacherish manner of much of his work notwithstanding. The urging to follow "one's deepest impulse" is either nonsensical or dangerous, for given the human condition impulsiveness would sooner issue in horror than in vitality. Only those in a

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state of grace can be trusted in following their deepest impulses. And these aristocrats of the spirit (artists, heroes, saints) need no exhortation, for they must follow these impulses by virtue of what they are. When Lawrence converts his vision into doctrine and turns prophesy into moral prescription, he is confused about his achievement. The visionary habit is alien to the moral life, because it refuses to accommodate itself to anything different from it. To confuse the visionary and the ethical is to hold out a false promise to the *demos* (everyone can have a vision if he would only care), a temptation that even the visionary artist finds hard to resist in a democratic society. To be a "Laurentian" is not a simple matter of cherishing "the warm life" and valuing spontaneity. (The cult of the Laurentian is a foolish reductive appropriation of Lawrence.)

The power of the visionary artist for us is in his autonomy, in his exclusive love of the mysterious and the inchoate, in what Lawrence called his otherness. He does not have the spirit of community. He may regret this on occasion and long for it as Lawrence did, but it is a futile longing, for the spirit of community is foreign to his character. And because of this the visionary artist has within him an extraordinary power of judgment. If we listen to him, we may be kept from the *hubris* of complacency and self-congratulation, of a facile faith in humanity and civilization. To write him off as a dangerous fellow then is to do a disservice not only to "life," but to the human community as well—indeed, it is to make intolerable the very idea of human life. But he *is* a dangerous fellow, and it is difficult not to sympathize with de Rougemont at the same time that we value Lawrence especially since the spirit of the age has come to be in many ways a horrible parody of that same Dionysian element that is supposed to inspire the artist.

Of course, Lawrence did not at all conceive of an opposition between the visionary and the ethical. Lawrence's refusal to tolerate a dualism between the visionary and the ethical—or in other terms, the passional and the social—is the basis of his attack on Freud in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. For Freud, in his characteristic view a natural harmony between impulse and civilization is impossible to achieve. Civilization, an Apollonian product, depends on the repression or the sublimation of the passional energies.

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> Civilization has been built up, under the pressure of the struggle of existence, by sacrifices in gratification of the primitive impulses, and it is to a great extent forever being recreated, as each individual successively joining the community, repeats the sacrifice of his instinctive pleasures for the common good. The sexual are amongst the most important of the instinctive forces thus utilized; they are in this way sublimated, that is to say, their energy is turned aside from its sexual goal and diverted towards other ends, no longer sexual and socially more valuable.

The tension between impulse and repression (between the visionary and the moral) that exists within both the individual and culture is a permanent tension to which man must accommodate himself. The tragic or pessimistic tone of Freud's later work reflects his view that the passional self and the requirements of civilized life are in permanent opposition to each other. In *Civilization and Its Discontents,* in which Freud complicates his view by the postulation of the aggressive instincts and the death wish, the opposition is not simply between impulse and regression, but also between Eros (the sublimation of the sexual instinct) and Thanatos (the destructive and disintegrative force in civilization). The possibility of harmony is embodied by Eros, "builder of cities," but Eros is only one term of the opposition in Freud's Manichean vision of civilization.

> The fateful question of the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent the cultural process developed in it will succeed in mastering the derangements of communal life caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. In this connection, perhaps the phase through which we are at this moment passing deserves special interest. Men have brought their powers of subduing the forces of nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man. They know this—hence arises a great part of their current unrest, their dejection, their mood of apprehension. And now it may be expected that the other of the two "heavenly forces," eternal Eros, will put forth his strength so as to maintain himself alongside his equally immortal adversary.

In *Fantasia of the Unconscious,* Lawrence rejects the Freudian

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idea that the sexual impulse is the deepest impulse in man and consequently the essential "motivity" of the unconscious. The impulse of "higher importance, and greater dynamic power" is "the desire of the human male to build a world . . . to build up out of his own self and his own belief and his own effort something wonderful." Lawrence asserts that the "religious or creative cotive" is "the first motive for all human activity." The unconscious is the divine presence in man from which all genuine civilization draws its energy. Civilization and culture, which have always been conceived to exist under the aegis of Apollo, the god that brings order to the wild Dionysian energies at large in the world, are conceived by Lawrence as products of those energies themselves. Lawrence conceives of culture in its ideal form as a fulfillment of the passional-visionary self, whereas Freud has the view that there exists a generic tragic opposition between the passional self and culture.

> . . . Even the Panama Canal would never have been built *simply* to let ships through. It is the pure disinterested craving of the human male to make something wonderful out of his own head and his own self, and his own soul's faith and delight, which starts everything going.

The opposition between Apollo and Dionysus is then a perverse contrivance of civilization in its present form, and the violence and destructiveness of the passional life is a function of the opposition between the gods, not a generic truth about the passional life itself. The destructiveness of the passional life is really its resentment at the repression from which it has suffered.

Lawrence never tells us how we can recover an unresentful passion after all those years of repression. Though he may be able to resolve the dualism in argument, Lawrence's imaginative work reveals the opposition between the visionary and the ethical at every moment. "Never trust the artist, trust the tale." Lawrence's argument in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* often reads like the casuistry against which he directed his fire when he discovered it in other writers. But it is a casuistry with which we must sympathize, for it reflects the anxious atmosphere in which he worked: the need to connect with others, to participate in the human communion was

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in keen struggle with the need to keep faithful to a vision that was anarchically individual, explosive and subversive. His impulse to argue for the vision represents an effort to join, in Malraux's phrase, his "madness to the universe." We respect the vision, but we cannot embrace it as doctrine. Between Lawrence and every serious reader of him there must be, I believe, a permanent tension: a sense of provocation and danger.

Lawrence is like Blake and Nietzsche, an artist beyond good and evil who compels our admiration and mistrust. Like Christ, Lawrence enters the human community a stranger and an enemy, possessed by a vision so subversive and dangerous that he can be endured only if he modifies it in communicating it—or if he is misunderstood. Lawrence does modify his vision and he has been, understandably, misunderstood: that is, made to serve the gods of a humanistic civilization. This too has been the fate of Blake and Nietzsche.

(*This essay is one of a series of revaluations of modern writers. Some of these essays will appear in a collection edited by Steven Marcus and Richard Poirier.*)

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Diana Trilling

AFTER THE PROFUMO CASE

As time settles over the Profumo affair, dimming our recollection of the daily excitements it provided at its height, only the figure of Dr. Stephen Ward continues to have a hold on our memory. Profumo himself, Christine Keeler, Mandy Rice-Davies: whoever physically survived a case which once looked so imperishable vanishes into the special oblivion prepared for scandalous public characters, while the man who died takes more and more shape among his ghostly colleagues. But this is not surprising. It was fairly early in the drama that Ward captured the stage from the brilliant Christine, who had already stolen it from Macmillan's Minister of War—he must always have suggested a complexity, or a significance, missing in the other leading persons. Then Ward committed suicide, and in taking his own life took the remaining life out of the spectacle, leaving behind him a brooding sense of public humiliation.

The British press was startlingly and at last subdued by Ward's act of terminal self-definition. Up to that point it had been the voice of a public which seemed quite to have lost its grip on actuality, alternating an (I suppose) expectable lubricity with alarming bouts of self-castigation. The scandal had started as nothing more than the familiar low-down on life in high places—the form is established in Western tradition; but all at once it became a metaphor of national catastrophe. It was as if the drastic diminution of Britain's prestige since the War, her failures at Bermuda and in the Common Market, all these wounds suffered in the recession of Empire, had been freshly exposed in the news of her "immorality." One listened

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in vain for the dry note of self-deflation one had been used to ascribe to the British in public crises. Like a man who loses his business and learns he has a fatal illness, only to come home and find that even his wife has betrayed him, England seemed to regard the Profumo case as final proof of her inability to hold her own in the world. Whether it was the London *Times* thundering its opinion that the issue in the case was moral, of cosmic, even theological dimensions, or the news commentators reveling in each disclosure as new evidence of the national degradation, the public response was everywhere undue, a cacophony of moral ostentations.

In the midst of the clamor, Ward quietly committed suicide but, it is important to note, after, not before, he stood trial. The fact that he waited to end his life until the moment between being tried and convicted—the verdict was foregone—represented something in the nature of courage, and gave retrospective dimension to his slim testimony. On the stand he had sounded mechanical, even rehearsed —my knowledge of the case comes only from the newspapers—like someone who had too often gone over the main outlines of his story, although perhaps not so much to make it a plausible legal defense as to try to extract its bare communicable meaning. The attempt to peel away the layers of distracting detail in order to reach the kernel of content was doomed to be unsuccessful; his story, after all, was not of a kind that easily yields its secret. There had nevertheless remained from his effort a clear moral, or perhaps pedagogic, intention. Here, Ward seemed to be saying of himself, stood a man who was patently guilty of violating certain of the moral standards of his society. But what about this society; what about this society in relation to *him*? Had it not made him a promise of moral tolerance which it was now failing to redeem? What had gone wrong, how had the train gone off the rails, for a private life to become so suddenly and completely a public outrage? For surely it must have been clear even to Ward himself, and despite the specific legal charges he faced, that it was not his financial dealings with his girls that had run him afoul of society but the whole pattern of his sexual behavior. But was not enlightenment—sexual enlightenment no less than political or cultural enlightenment—the very cornerstone of modernity? And what did enlightenment consist in if not the ability to accommodate values different from our own: the values of our

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political enemies, of different races and ethnic groups, the values of the emotionally ill and the sexually deviant? "I am over-sexed," Ward announced in solemn self-diagnosis, and the very primitiveness of the statement indicated his belief that could he but present his clinical "insight" with enough immediate simplicity, there was bound to be the proper response of "understanding," such as the courts and even the general educated public are nowadays presumed to have learned from psychiatry.

It was moving that Ward never collapsed or cringed before public opinion, that he never tried to make himself out to be other than he was. No more than we would now expect a writer of any degree of personal dignity and social conscientiousness to deny the public charge of homosexuality, did Ward deny his departure from the sexual norm of the society that was assessing his right to equal membership in it. What one saw in him was the need at least partially to separate himself out, as a man, from the criminal activities in which he had been engaged—this and the futile struggles of someone overtaken by a social force of which he had but poor awareness until its full punitive strength had descended upon him. So might a drug-addict, explaining his addiction and admitting that it had led him to steal, yet resist the verdict of law as a whole moral judgment on him as a human being. His defense, except where it was directed to concrete allegations of the prosecution, was medical although without a medical language, cultural and even intellectual though with no real power of mind to further the still-difficult minority position. The forlorn attempt to comprehend his fate and to bring into rational accord the personal and the social considerations that had now become so at odds with each other set the tone of his public performance, and it was a tone that qualified him in some awkward way as the small hero of the scandal, perhaps in embryo its man of consciousness and therefore its sole victim to rise to the level of tragedy.

Certainly a personal history could not have been more bizarre than Ward's: the substantial rearing, the good natural endowment of looks and charm or, more strictly, facility; then the many-faceted career of osteopath, portrait-painter, pimp. The conjunction of the two professions of osteopathy and art is of course stranger in America than in England; while even in England osteopathy may lack the prestige of medicine, it is not the marginal profession there that it is

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here. The point about Ward in the English professional context is the similar distance from center of his two vocations: even in England, osteopathy is the branch of medicine as portrait-painting is the branch of art which, while offering a reliable financial return, asks the least investment of passion and imposes the lightest burden of responsibility. That Ward, a man of manifest energies, exercised his choice in both art and healing where there was a minimal demand for thoughtfulness, or discipline, or professional commitment could well be a clue to the personal disposition which led him to add to an already busy life the peripheral career of procuring, for it suggests that the single motive that wholly compelled him was sexual phantasy —apparently it was to the demands of the sexual imagination that Ward gave the dedication we look for in the artist or physician. His urgent art or, we might put it, his urgent therapy, was sex, perhaps chiefly in its perverse aspects.

Ward was thus in social effect, if not in precise legal fact, on trial for his choice of dedication: the pursuit of his sexual dream. And I suspect that this is why his ordeal, culminating in death, left us with such a large residue of unresolved confusion and embarrassment and the wish to close the book on the whole affair—there are few sexual dreams that are not the common dream of humanity. Of Profumo, we know that he was guilty of an indiscretion that ruined his career, but the career and the indiscretion in the end stood for nothing that really interests us. As a fallen figure he suggests little more than foolishly-defeated worldly ambition. As for Christine Keeler, she had always been the person with something to sell for as much money as possible. Seemingly without personal principal, without, we guess, the ability to feel any emotion commensurate with her precocious experience of life or with the acute public situation into which she had been catapulted, she was scarcely someone to touch our sense of the significant; after Ward's suicide, a public that had been all-too-naturally available to her seductions was quick to retract its enthusiasm. Ward alone in the case was a representative figure, someone in whom we can read, if we will, a record of our times and of ourselves in our times. And now that the case has receded as news, the need to bring him into this cultural-historical light begins to press on us.

The role of sexual perversity in what we like to think of as

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normal sexual life could not be more ambiguous than it is today in our society. Much of this ambiguity stems from its having been permitted to become a subject of open—but never fully open—discussion in recent years, and is contributed to by the fact that it is from that most respectable quarter of contemporary culture, science, that it made its way into literature, at which point science fled the discussion. In speaking of science, I refer of course to Freud's investigations of the polymorphous perversity of normal human infancy, and the consequent recognition by psychiatry of the large reservoir of perverse sexual impulse in the normal adult. From a moral-social view, the best, or most, that psychiatry has done with its knowledge of our natural endowment of perversity is to assign its control to that force in man which desires his survival in civilization, while giving permission to such perverse remnant in us as can be presumed to offer no threat to our picture of ourselves as civilized people. The common formulation of psychiatry, that is, is that anything is sexually permissible to a man and woman who love each other and who each wants what is being done. Because the premise of present-day psychiatry, as it deals with sex, is heterosexual love as both the source and support of the social institution of marriage, it is heterosexual love that sanctions natural impulse, it is marriage that licenses an unspecified degree of mutually agreed-upon perverse indulgence.

It was at this stage of our scientific progress in the understanding of our sexual natures that literature took over from psychiatry, without a credit line even at the start and, later, with a considerable acerbity. Certainly marriage has not disappeared from modern fiction, not even from our most consciously radical fiction. On the contrary, it is a constant presence, though staggering under the excessive burden which literature imposes on it in the search through the incoherence of society for man's possibilities of self-fulfillment. But marriage is far from being either the only arena or the only goal of sexual activity, as it is described in modern literature. Nor is it to love that literature assigns the task of validating sexuality or determining what is or is not a proper form of sexual conduct. Where, in the first years after the war, it was the concern of the enlightened wing of our culture to enlist sex in the wholesome on-going social effort, the chief value that attaches to sex in our advanced literary view today lies in its opposition to society, in the individual freedom it celebrates and of

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which it can be taken to be the measure. And obviously the right to explore those of our sexual instincts that are precisely *not* in the service of civilization ranks high in the scale of the freedoms by which the self is affirmed.

And yet, for all the license that a free sexuality currently takes to itself in literature, we must remark how few perversities are explored in serious writing and how many still left to pornography. So far, among the sexual activities which are thought to be perverse, homosexuality has been the chief area for serious literary study. Heterosexual oral and anal sexuality have been but lightly ventured upon. Sado-masochistic activity remains virtually untouched. On the other hand, the orgy, oldest of socially-sanctioned sexual discursions, becomes our newest mythic activity, to which literary rebelliousness attaches much of its wish for an assertion of personal freedom.

In revealing the sado-masochistic, orgiastic indulgences which Ward provided for his clients to a world that responded as it did, the Profumo affair served as a reminder that even today, when, as I think, art creates more than it reflects the ordinary life of society, there is yet the very widest gulf between art and actuality. But the case also opened up to fresh inspection a territory that science had once had the courage to move in on with full awareness of its human immediacy but which in more recent years it has, to all public appearance, surrendered to statistics. The perversity of everyday life which a Kinsey Report tabulated for us we were able to receive without affect; there were no people behind those charts and tables, only subjects of interviews. It was the sad accomplishment of Stephen Ward to present us with the material of statistics in a live man. And when he killed himself because he had become such a figure of public shame, all people of sensitive feeling must intuitively have taken some responsibility for his isolation, even his illegality, in a culture that prides itself on its large-minded view of the sexual life.

And yet of course it was only as he was brought into the public glare, a man accused, that Ward spoke to us of loneliness. Until he is arrested, whoever makes a commerce of sexual perversity never lacks company or customers. His enterprise, whether it is on the fringe of respectability or outside its boundaries, has a built-in gregariousness. Happily, the names of the wealthy gentlemen who used Ward's services, the masked men and naked waiters, have been with-

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held, and we can only guess how wide was the objective ground on which Ward could persuade himself that his sexual occupations were not too divergent from socially-approved behavior. But it is fair to conjecture that Ward's clients were not only numerous enough but sufficiently well-placed to have constituted a considerable social authority for someone who would seem to have had but a weak hold on all realities. In Profumo's instance, exposure—by which I mean, here, not merely the public scandal but the enforced acknowledgment of a social power apart from and stronger than personal desire—produced, it would seem, an hysteria; for how else, except as hysteria, explain his impossible lie to Macmillan and to the House of Commons? In the instance of Ward, the confrontation with a divided social authority—an extreme of social condemnation living side by side with the condonation he had known within his own circle—destroyed him.

From a clinical view, Ward's split consciousness of authority probably points to a personal pathology. But it of course does more than this too: it also points to the nature of our culture. Although the division between official and dissident values is inevitable in any society, it is where a culture is most divided in itself that we are most likely to find a segment of the population exercising its right to widen rather than close the breach. Sometimes this effort is profoundly serious, and takes the form of art. More generally, it will take the form of moral improvisation, perhaps available to public examination, perhaps shielded behind an outward conformity. The life of Ward and his friends was nothing if not frivolous, nothing if not improvised and outwardly conformable; and yet in a curious way it partook of the quality of the life of art in our time. Indeed, in the gross, even grotesque, connection we can trace between the life of Ward and his group and the dominant movement of contemporary artistic thought lies one of the continuing interests of the case.

It is clearly ridiculous to think of Ward as a serious artist, or to think of his circle as participants in any of the serious movements of contemporary protest. Even on its surface, the half-world he shared with his friends gives unmistakable signs of having been a cultural half-world as well, where there was no discrimination between an easy knowingness—what we call sophistication—and the substance

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of serious artistic rebellion. We recall that Karl Marx isolated a type he speaks of as the *lumpen*-proletarian, someone who has no genuine identification with the interests of the working-class but who is nonetheless allied to that class because of his exclusion from or rejection of the middle class; by analogy, we can think of Ward as a *lumpen*-artist, who pursued his minor talent not because of any genuine involvement with artistic concerns but as an aspect of his rejection of all the morally-strenuous business of life. As the *lumpen*-proletariat represented for Marx a parody of the class-conscious working-class, so the Ward circle represents a parody on the serious artistic consciousness of our day. Its conscription of its membership from such a broad range of British society; its existence in a universe making so little moral demand that it constitutes a moral and therefore a social vacuum; the close interplay in its life between the refusal of a defined social authority and a defined sexual authority; the sense of community it would seem to have generated in its devotion to the forbidden—for all these unstated principles which seem to apply to Ward's group, contemporary art has its equivalents.

The *lumpen*-proletarian of Marx was often criminal, or edging toward criminality. Similarly, the *lumpen*-artist today, especially if he is a person of spirit, will tend to be drawn in this direction of our current rebelliousness. Describing the followers of Louis-Napoleon in France in 1850—and it is the same passage in which he speaks of the *lumpen*-proletariat—Marx wrote:

> Alongside decayed roués with doubtful means of subsistence and of doubtful origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds . . . tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaux* [procurors], brothel-keepers, porters, *literati* . . . in short the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la Bohême*. . . .

One's mind leaps at once to present-day Cliveden, the estate of Ward's friend Lord Astor, where the British patriciate had only to dip into the swimming pool to come up with the fulfillment of a roué's dream, procured for him by a portrait-painter to royalty. Marx's vivid sketch of Bonaparte's followers is emotionally overcharged, but it leaves us in no doubt of the intimacy between the raffish and the criminal

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in the bohemianism of more than a hundred years ago. Today this intimacy persists. The chief difference is that today the outraging of law is explicit rather than merely incidental in our programs of protest.

And one must suppose that it was the discernible parallel between Ward's style of life and the tendencies of contemporary dissidence that led certain well-known British writers, whose consciousness of themselves as social rebels is definitive of their work, to send a wreath to Ward's grave. Their intuition that there existed a bond between the enterprise of modern literature and Ward's death, self-inflicted but dictated by established social forces, was as sound as their decision to signalize his burial was then honorable.

But more even than a tendency in radical art is mirrored in the Profumo affair: there is also a close parallel between Ward's political protest and the main direction of modern political protest. In his official report of the case, Lord Denning said of Ward that he was "without doubt a Communist sympathizer" who was "much under the influence of Ivanov," the Soviet intelligence officer who was having an affair with Christine Keeler at the same time as Profumo. While it may of course be true that Ward was much under the influence of Ivanov, the discipleship is not required to explain how Ward got mixed up in pro-Soviet activities, his political excursions follow so logically from his life-style. For a personal protest like Ward's has necessarily these days to be in some degree a social-political protest as well: this is how things are now in the world, and Ward was a worldly character. Not since the 1920's has rebelliousness, however private its impetus, been free to express itself in purely private terms. While in earlier decades of the century we assumed that the refusal of the moral values of the middle class referred only to the living of one's personal life or perhaps to the individual's need for an unencumbered social vision, today we demand that personal protest wear the cloak of social responsibility. It is not alone on his own behalf but on behalf of all mankind, even on behalf of the physical survival of the race, that the individual now announces his rejection of an established social authority. In our decade, rebellion without a social "cause" is the mark only of the illiterate or of those who are hopelessly without tie to society.

In this situation, political ignorance or light-mindedness, such

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as we impute to Ward simply on the biographical record, presents, certainly, no hindrance to the taking of political positions. And the position most available to someone who divides his life, as Ward did, between, on the one hand, middle-class accommodation and, on the other hand, repudiation of the morality of the middle-class, is the "progressive" position. The anomoly that might superficially appear to be involved in the fact that Ward's communist sympathies were matched by an achieved ambition to make his way among the rich and well-born has long since ceased to be an anomoly at all. Far from disqualifying Ward for the company of the wealthy and modish, his political progressivism would have provided just the right weighting of social solidity to balance the perhaps troubling extreme to which he was prepared to carry the sexual adventure.

But then the question arises: Are Profumo, who was a member of Macmillan's Conservative government, or—say—Lord Astor also to be thought of as progressives, despite their actual political affiliations? The answer, I think, is yes, but with significant modifications. Like Ward himself, his friends must be recognized as personal-cultural "radicals" even though, unlike Ward, the personal and cultural choice stopped short of a politics most in keeping with it. While we can be fairly sure that the disparate company at Lord Astor's was organized on personal and sexual rather than political lines—and what better solvent for political diversity than illicit sex? —there was implicit in the style of life this various group had elected a shared freedom in matters of morality such as nowadays most readily translates itself into a progressive politics, or which at least opens the path for a steady erosion of the cultural foundations of a conservative politics.

We have a demonstration of how the process works in that American, or international, phenomenon called Café Society. Lacking a census of the political affiliations of the members of Café Society, we must suppose that, given the cost of this manner of life, it attracts as many voting Republicans as Democrats. Yet, apart from such divergence as may exist in matters of economic opinion, Café Society cannot be described as any more politically than culturally conservative—the chic and the conservative are antithetical principles. In a section of society in which the latest fashion determines one's preferences in food, dress, music, pictures, plays, a conservative

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politics would today be as dated as the cultural tastes of another era; and this is as true for Republicans as for Democrats. Just as in America, if only in the North, we inevitably develop a liberal Republicanism much influenced by the more progressive views of the Democratic party, so in England Toryism has been bound to borrow social attitudes from the Left. This is the law of modern political development in the democracies, at least until such time as political reaction may organize itself to impose its malign power on the scattered forces of progress: progressivism, liberalism, enlightenment are the dominant, conservatism is the recessive, political trait of modern democracy. We see the law in operation even in Lord Denning's report, where the moral tone of a Tory jurist is little distinguishable from what we might expect of a spokesman from the Left.

But then there is the actual British Left itself, whose contribution to the contradictions presented in the Profumo affair was not a small one. Political opportunism has of course never shunned a good scandal as a means of embarrassing an opponent. The fact, however, that it was the British Labour party, England's advance-guard in social reform, that detonated this particular public scandal is an aspect of the case that has been understandably minimized by commentators of the liberal persuasion: it is not comfortable to contemplate where the Labour party was led by the opportunity of Profumo's misconduct. For although, historically, socialism has always been the party of puritan values in personal morality, for some time now in the Western democracies there has been a large if unspecified and unexamined assimilation of political libertarianism and personal-cultural libertarianism. When the Russian revolution deserted the libertarian personal-cultural platform it had first formulated for itself—free love, free abortion, free divorce—it required a profound alteration in feeling among its adherents in the democracies to accommodate this retrogression; we can put it that it was with this cultural swing that the Russian revolution ceased for many people to be a social experiment and became, instead, just another form of established power. Whoever has wished to preserve the significant distinction between Soviet Communism and democratic socialism has had to deal not only with the political authoritarianism of which cultural authoritarianism is such a firm buttress but also with Russia's

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repression of personal, along with cultural, dissidence. The recognition that the Soviet state is of a kind which denies all expressions of personal and cultural radicalism has put the Soviet sympathizer in the democracies in a position in which he exercises his freedom of political choice in defense of a system which robs the individual of his freedom of moral choice. The sympathizer handles this inconsistency by developing one set of standards in the international situation, another in the domestic; it is only in very recent years, when cultural dissidence, of a sort that is likely to include a personal and sexual protest too, has found a voice in the younger generation of Soviet writers, that the contradiction gives any sign of lessening. In making a scandal of Profumo's personal conduct, British socialism pursued a moral course more appropriate to the authoritarianism of the Soviet Union than to the libertarianism of its own constituents, or certainly of its supporters among cultural radicals whose effort it is, at least in their own country, to bring into the closest possible conjunction their personal and cultural and their political values.

It fell to Mr. Harold Wilson, as leader of the Labour party, to speak from the side of enlightenment and, apparently in some awareness of the awkwardness his party had contrived for itself, he was at pains to separate Profumo's political from his sexual indiscretions —he assured the House of Commons that it was only the security issue involved in Profumo's sharing a mistress with Ivanov that concerned his party. But there was a note of piety in his protestation alongside of which the position taken by the London *Times,* that the scandal was wholly sexual, wholly moral, had a reassuring ring of honesty.

And, as it turned out, the *Times* was not only more accurate about the source of the scandal, it was also more correct in objective fact: there was, actually, no security issue in the case that didn't, expectably enough, evaporate under investigation, although by the time this had happened the Labour party had accomplished some major part of its undertaking: Macmillan's government had suffered an irreparable loss of prestige. For here was another paradox of the affair: the fact that it was the party in which political enlightenment and tolerance put their confidence and which is therefore supposed not to be excessively suspicious of Communism that employed a political tactic usually thought to be that of reaction. It is true that

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Christine Keeler had on one occasion been asked to obtain military information for the Russians from Britain's Minister of War. But there was never the slightest evidence that Profumo had betrayed his office or country, or even been tempted to. All the Labour party had against the Macmillan government in the scandal was that Profumo had been in a position to divulge his secrets to the enemy had he wished to, and that the Prime Minister had perhaps failed properly to guard against this potential security risk. But even Profumo's vulnerability might well have been assessed differently than it was; for does sexual intimacy in our times, when we are so busy bemoaning our sexual casualness, really denote so drastic a loss of self-control that it risks a man's ability to hold on to top-secret information? Surely the view of sexual passion that was implicit in the Labour party's fear for British security suggests not our own day but the day of the silent film, when a man in the throes of desire was a man crazed by lust, ready to give or tell all to sate his desperate appetite.

Here, again, Mr. Wilson must dimly have perceived the anachronism in which he had become entrapped: he directed his fire against Macmillan's careless handling of security rather than against the risks to which Profumo had exposed himself. But without exempting Macmillan from the charge of inadequate caution in security matters, we can yet find much to marvel at in the Labour party's anxiety about this aspect of the national interest. We are moved to ask when it became so vital a concern of Mr. Wilson to secure us against Communism and to caution us in our dealings with Communists? Would the party and persons who were so alarmed about Profumo's sharing a mistress with a Russian officer now be prepared to say exactly where they draw the line on fraternization with Communists? Should the security services rouse up the Prime Minister as soon as two men, an Englishman and a Russian, even an English public official and a Russian diplomat, sit down to bridge together? Or should they wait until it is not cards but cocktails that make the social occasion? Or is the national interest perhaps secure so long as friendliness stops short of the bedroom? From America, and in dull logic, we might even inquire whether the Profumo case doesn't force the enlightened English who assumed that anyone singled out by McCarthy was naturally blameless to make their own equation,

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now, between American McCarthyism and British socialism? The questions are provocative, to be sure, but they were provoked. And in raising them here, perhaps what is most worth remarking is the reluctance of England's very articulate section of public opinion, her writers of the Left, to raise them itself.

Alongside the drastic incoherence with which the Labour party operated in the affair, there was something appealing in Macmillan's consistency of behavior, which we had been used to taking only as evidence of a dreary limitation of public view. Throughout the scandal Macmillan had only one recourse: the traditional code of a gentleman. When information against Profumo had been brought to him, he had asked his Minister of War whether what was being said was so; assured the accusations were unfounded, he had entirely accepted Profumo's word as the word of another gentleman like himself. Poor Macmillan, no one would seem to have told him that the time had come when, like Profumo, one could be a gentleman and a political conservative and still play by strange new rules. No one had even told him, what was most perplexing, that in a world in which gentlemen's agreements are still relied upon in business, they cannot be relied upon in government and that one must put no more trust in a colleague's fidelity to truth than in his faithfulness to his wife. It was reported of the Prime Minister that under Labour's attack in Parliament he suddenly appeared old and shaken. We know now that, in addition to facing the collapse of his career, Macmillan was ill; but we can also assume that he was as much undone by the confrontation with this new *ad hoc* morality which he met on every side of him as by bad health and the threat to his political power.

As for the more direct victims of the case, even apart from Ward who was to carry the heaviest, the fatal burden of social opprobrium, there was of course Profumo, too, who was for all public purposes ruined. While such is his accidental place in the drama that it is entirely fitting that Profumo be allowed to slip from memory, we hesitate to ring down the final curtain on him as a public figure without some last small attempt to understand why he did indeed lie to Macmillan; for even if we accept the hypothesis that nothing in his life of privilege had prepared him for an act of moral bravery and that, in the absence of moral intransigence,

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hysteria was bound to have its way with him, the purely psychological explanation seems finally to fail in adequacy before the realization of the simple other course open to him than that of lying. He could have said, "I have done nothing to harm my country; my private life is no one's business but my own." As a matter of fact, during the case we were frequently reminded that when the Duke of Wellington was being blackmailed by the famous courtesan, Harriette Wilson, this was the stand he took: to her threat to include him in her memoirs, Wellington replied, "Publish and be damned!"

The Wellington precedent is cited, of course, to suggest how much the quality both of statesmen and of ladies of pleasure has deteriorated with the passage of the years. And who, looking at Profumo and at Christine Keeler, whose notion of life might have been concocted for her by some tenth-rate Hollywood hack, would wish to argue the opposite? Yet surely Profumo's failure to match Wellington's firmness was dictated not merely by personal but also by cultural weakness—when we are told how much better Wellington behaved, what we are not asked to consider is the alteration in the quality of society itself in these intervening years: the moral hypocrisy which goes along with our progress in sexual freedom, the mounting confusion which attends our wish to join our advance in science and technology with an advance in moral wisdom. If we compare our period with Wellington's from the point of view of sexual enlightenment, we can falsely persuade ourselves that we today have entirely the better of things. The fact is that had the Minister of War admitted his affair with Christine Keeler, it is doubtful that Macmillan could have supported him successfully, that society would have stood behind a truthful Profumo as it did behind a truthful Wellington. The pressures of respectable opinion might well have been too strong, pressures of a kind which seem actually to increase in our society the more that sexual freedom becomes every man's democratic right.

In his book, *Growing Up Absurd*, Paul Goodman describes our period in history as a time of incompleted revolutions not only in the sexual sphere but in all departments of life. We look back upon the Profumo affair and wonder where we could find a sharper demonstration of this insight. Ours is an era of "cases," starting with the Sacco-Vanzetti case in the 1920's, proceeding through the

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Hiss and Oppenheimer cases to the Rosenberg case, the Chessman case, the Eichmann case, and most recently culminating, if we can call it a culmination, in the Profumo case. That, in 1963, our great confrontation between opposing social principles began in the discovery that a government official had been engaged in illicit sex, was opportunistically manipulated by the party which in England is supposed to speak most firmly for the liberal—by which we mean the decent—values, and was brought to its only semblance of moral resolution by the suicide of a man of the character of Stephen Ward, should remind us that the life of reason continues to have its troubles.

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RANDOM HOUSE

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HART CRANE NEAR THE END

1.

The woman in love with him
Pleads with him, "Why
Must there be such misery?
What is there in you that wants this?"
And still he does not feel it,
Feels nothing, sealed in his self.

The beach house is filled up.
The guests drift in and out
Talking in wafts, sozzled,
Sunburns moonlit; dappled fluttering
Shirts at summery games. But
Now near dawn it's cold. He sees
The clock ticks swimming through the air,
Swimming eyelashed eyelets tiny as rotifers.
A warped smile is everywhere,
Half in, half out of water.

In youth more delicate than the boy Rimbaud's,
The sunset nose, lips like blood sausages . . .
Course of the day's
Lost, unsought breaths, uncounted,
Each separate as a life, a guest.
His life had purposes!
The hall clock ticks . . .
Oh the heresies, Oh each distinct,
Blue and bright and trite and evil, each,
Those efforts to see the Light
Chasing each other's tails—
Whirled into moral butter like Black Sambo's tigers,
As the phonograph spins Ravel's "Bolero."

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2.

A glance—a snipe's beak—
Opens, he sees
The scorched
Tobacco-y nerve ends . . .
They are wandering through the sumac,
Wondering if it is poisonous,
Blondes and brunettes.
"Who belongs to you?" she whispers.
His life is falling.
His butched unruly hair boils
Through her fingers like the ocean.
The sun beats lightning on the waves,
The waves fold thunder on the sand.
She is afraid.

3.

Raising his cigar and drink,
He gives a toast: "To the dying
Wildlife of Mexico—myself!
Ah, to Lorenzo,
Of course, too.
At forty-five, at his noon eclipsed—
Our former neighbor, up there
In heaven with Beiderbecke.
The famous style was just the life,
He handed you the books blade-first,
Keen as a castaway's thirst.
His spirit,
Like a little straight stick,
A little straight stick,
So set and separate, so free,
Wrestled verse by verse
Favorite flowers, birds and beasts."

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He barely finishes.
With a roar the surf razes
Last night's sand castle
And seizes her sailor's cap
As she gasps for breath,
Fighting back tears.
The white dot wags on the water
Like candlelight in a draft,
Flickers, dips and reappears—
As if, someone says, on an altar offered to
The anchored white United Fruit ship,
A hospital ship,
Which it seems to want to draw near.

"Why, it reverences United Fruit"
(Up goes his glass),
"Our brilliantined
Hustler queen, our Muse.
But our Muse keeps his pitch to himself now,
From me anyway—that white lie,
Inspirer of my verse, my
Sermon on San Juan hill *The Bridge,*
That hemorrhaged,
Flowing out under the Morgan boardroom doors
Like a ray stalking, a gliding
Opera cape of blood.

"Sweetheart, don't cry. Let's see.
Tolstoy is like the sea.
Shakespeare is like the sea. Or let's say
Whitman is like a spar
Off the *America,*
Wooed by the *Pequod,* the *Patna,* the *Lusitania,*
The *Titanic,* the maniacs,
The siren idealists—America
Weltering in her element
Like ambergris. Slick sightless mass,

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Clung to by a sweet smell.
The old fag as he drowns still acting
The little girl
Who can come to no harm."

He still has his charm.
Her childless troubled soul quiets,
Glows like a flame in Vermeer;
Her startled little vices
Twinkle off like swallows.

"Don't cry, sweetheart.
Keep my kisses in your pocket
Till I get back. Oh, wouldn't you like to see
Ohio with me
On my trip!
But if I come back,
Who will put up with me?
Who will put me up?
Sunshine, I've no place to go,
And no place to go
Is easy enough to find."

4.

On the desk
The paper is blank,
Freezing to sleep
In the snow field cast by the lamp.
He tries to think;
Tries to remember the evening.
Faceless
Spondee and iamb couples kick by
In a conga-line.
The baker, the breadline,
The Communist and Capitalist . . .

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To them poetry is
A saint's temptation
And his desert, both.
The wide dry heartland sky,
The teetotalling Sahara
Over Chagrin Falls,
When he was last there,
Ideally white as Moby Dick,
Devoured him like a drop.

5.

From the bed,
Through her jiggling cigarette
She recites: "Then you downed
The other bottle of tequila.
You said you were Baudelaire—
Or was it Marlowe?—
You said you were Blake
Talking English with the angels,
And said you were Christ, of course,
But *never* would say
You were yourself. And the voice!
The steady inhuman horror
Making my heart contract!
You cursed me, my makeup,
Cursed the moon, its light,
Cursed that boyfriend,
All your other friends, all the guests.
My God, you cursed the elements!
And separately, by name,
The heliotrope, the heaven-tree,
The star jessamine, the sweet-by-night;
And even the spring pool
With the small ducks, the lily pad;
And even the air we breathed together,
Because I breathed it and the flowers.

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"You wept. You said,
'There *is* goodness,
That from bayberry made modest candles
And rose jam from hips and haws.
And Blake talked English with the angels.'
And you wanted to make love to me,
Though I can't imagine how."

6.

When morning breaks, he takes
His first drink of water in a day.
Petite veille d'ivresse, sainte!
His orange fireball eye sees,
Dried yolk yellow like a slicker,
The faded fire hydrant
Pop from the grass like a bird's note,
And its black beak tweets
Me! Me!

Frederick Seidel

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Mary McCarthy

THE HUE AND CRY

When I read *Eichmann in Jerusalem* in the *New Yorker* last winter I thought it splendid and extraordinary. I still do. But apparently this is because I am a Gentile. As a Gentile, I don't "understand." Neither do any of my Gentile friends and relations, who speak about it to me in lowered voices. "Did *you* get that out of it?" "No." The only Gentiles who have "understood" in print have been rather special cases: Judge Musmanno, who was attacked in the book, Professor Trevor-Roper, who has a corner on Nazi history in its popular form, and Richard Crossman, M.P., who has been championing the state of Israel since 1946 and who winters in Tiberias. So far as I know, all Miss Arendt's hostile reviews, not counting these, have come from Jews, and those favorable to her from Gentiles, with four exceptions: A. Alvarez, George Lichtheim, Bruno Bettelheim, and Daniel Bell. The division between Jew and Gentile is even more pronounced in private conversation, where a Gentile, once the topic is raised in Jewish company (and it always is), feels like a child with a reading defect in a class of normal readers—or the reverse. It is as if *Eichmann in Jerusalem* had required a special pair of Jewish spectacles to make its "true purport" visible. And such propagandists as Lionel Abel, writing in *Partisan Review* (Summer 1963), or Marie Syrkin, writing in *Dissent,* have been eagerly offering their pair to the reader for a peep into Miss Arendt's mind. "The Clothes of the Empress" Miss Syrkin calls her review, advertising a display of Miss Arendt seen through, exposed in all her nakedness. In a cruder way, her antagonists in private "expose" her as an anti-Semite, and a newspaper story speaks of the wife of an Israeli official in New York who kept calling her "Hannah Eichmann" —by a slip of the tongue, of course. More moderate parlor critics talk of "arrogance" or "lack of proportion" in her treatment of the Jewish Councils while conceding that Miss Arendt is of course not an anti-Semite nor an admirer of Eichmann's. But this is said in the tone of a

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concession: these Jews, many of whom call themselves friends of the author, are more interested in enumerating the shortcomings of her book than in repelling the slanders that are circulating about her in and out of print, even though they know they are slanders. These slanders, which they hear all the time and which are intended to destroy the reputation of a living woman, excite them far less than Miss Arendt's "slander" of the Jewish leadership, who are dead and beyond being hurt by it, if it is a slander. I am told that at a meeting held under the auspices of *Dissent* to discuss Miss Arendt's book only one voice from the audience was raised in her defense and that voice was shouted down; some other Jews present disagreed with what was being said but they remained silent.

In such an atmosphere, so remote from that of free speech, *Partisan Review* published Lionel Abel's "The Aesthetics of Evil," with the announcement that it was opening a discussion. In other words, Miss Arendt's defenders would be given an opportunity to reply. Daniel Bell's very good piece in the last issue was not so much a defense as a plea for an armistice, so I am going to speak up, but it is with a heavy heart. First because I am Miss Arendt's friend, and friends are regarded as prejudiced. Second because I am a Gentile, and I fear that this fact will only rejoice her enemies, since are not all Gentiles anti-Semitic? Third, because I do not feel that Abel's piece deserves a reply on its own merits. I can only see it as a document in the hate campaign against Miss Arendt and one of the worst. The two serious points Abel raises—a) how does Miss Arendt account for the mass slaughter of Jews in the Ukraine when no Jewish organizations existed there? b) how does she reconcile her criticism of the Jewish leadership with the picture of totalitarian terror she gave in *The Origins of Totalitarianism?*—are so entwined with insinuations, innuendoes, charges of bad faith that it is hard to free the trunk of his argument from this mass of creepers and look at it squarely. He accuses Miss Arendt throughout of deliberately suppressing evidence ("She must know very well," etc.) that does not suit her hand, and he nudges the reader to guess what that "hand" may be: infatuation with her own ideas, a love-hate affair with totalitarianism, a preference for butchers over their victims, for the strong over the weak, for—why not say it?—the Nazis over the Jews. As a reader, Abel claims to feel that Eichmann "comes off so much better in her book than his victims." This is given *a priori*, though it is also his conclusion, which is arrived at by a vicious circle—the term never sounded more apt. "Eichmann is aesthetically palatable, and his victims are aesthetically repulsive," he finishes, as he began. He offers no

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evidence on behalf of this idea. He can defend it, if he wishes, as his personal impression. But this is more of a judgment of Abel than of Miss Arendt: reading her book, he liked Eichmann better than the Jews who died in the crematoriums. Each to his own taste. It was not my impression.

But since Abel is not the only one to insist that Eichmann somehow got preferential treatment, he must be answered, if only as a spokesman for those less well read and less intellectually gifted than he. It is hardly credible to me that any reader, no matter how stupid, could really imagine that Miss Arendt divides the guilt equally between Eichmann and the Jews, let alone that she regards Eichmann as a lovely object in contrast to the Jewish dead. And yet this has happened, and it must be understood.

Before writing this, I have gone back and reread *Eichmann in Jerusalem* as objectively as I can. My original feeling was that the part allotted to the Jewish leadership was quite small in the whole story Miss Arendt told. It had not struck me particularly, especially since it was not new; anybody who had followed the Kastner case or had read reviews of the Hilberg book was familiar with the fact of Jewish cooperation; such cooperation, indeed, was only another facet of the story told in concentration camp literature by Rousset, Margarete Buber-Neumann, Bettelheim, and others: the leaders of the victims cooperated with their jailers. My original feeling proved to be right: in a book of two hundred and sixty pages, eight pages are devoted to the cooperation of the Jewish leadership with Eichmann's office, and two and a quarter pages to a discussion of privileged categories of Jews (war veterans, famous people, etc.). Both passages are certainly critical, and the second, which reviews the conduct not only of Jews but of Gentile groups in pressing the Nazis for "special" treatment for Jews, seems to me harsher. Besides this there are passing references to Jewish cooperation or the lack of it.

Now some of Miss Arendt's critics complain that she gave too much space and prominence to this topic (how can one measure prominence?), while others, including Abel, say that her treatment was too short. The only way to have satisfied both parties would have been to omit the whole subject, which is probably what most Jews would have liked best. My conclusion is that those who were truly shocked and pained by these "revelations," were not shocked and pained by the fact (which they must have known about at least vaguely) but by the context in which it was put. Miss Arendt's boldness was in putting this distressing material in the context of the Nazi guilt, where Jews felt it did not

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belong, where it was "out of all proportion." To speak in the same breath of the guilt of Eichmann and the guilt of the *Judenräte* seemed offensive, like equating them; yet Miss Arendt never for one instant equates them, and how could she assess the activities of Eichmann while suppressing the part played by the Jewish leaders, with whom his office constantly dealt?

When she writes her famous sentence (often distorted in quotation), "To a Jew this role of the Jewish leaders in the destruction of their own people is undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story," she is expressing the same pain her Jewish readers felt in reading her summary of that "dark chapter" and for which they are ready to condemn her, as a tyrant used to condemn to death the messenger of bad news. The "darkest chapter," incidentally, does not mean the worst; it means the hardest to contemplate, for a Jew.

As for Abel's contention that she ought to have discussed the motives and arguments of the Jewish leaders, she indicates that these motives ranged from high to low, as one would expect. Abel's imagination, he shows, was quite able to reconstruct the arguments that must have taken place—a feat not beyond the power of the ordinary reader. Possibly what some Jews feared was that though they themselves could understand these motives, others (Gentiles?) might not. What many of her critics hold against her is that she tries to understand Eichmann and does not make the same effort for the Jewish leaders. But their behavior is quite understandable, unlike that of the Nazis. They acted the way most respectable citizens would; they temporized, tried not to think the worst, looked for a formula that would placate the enemy. The name of this in politics is appeasement. Miss Arendt, says Abel, does not mention the middle-class character of the Jewish Councils. She did not have to.

Abel claims that Miss Arendt blames the leadership for not having resisted. She does not. The question of resistance is raised on pages nine and ten of her book. Her conclusion is that resistance was impossible. But between resistance and cooperation there was a small space in which some action—or, rather, resolution—might have been taken. Miss Arendt perhaps exaggerates the size of this space, and it must have varied from country to country and town to town. The example she gives of the Danish rabbi who called his people together, told them the truth, that an order had gone out for their deportation, and ordered them to disperse, no doubt would have been impossible to follow with success in countries where the native population was hostile and physically and culturally distinct from the Jews, but in some places, at some times, it

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could have been followed. Miss Arendt's other famous sentence, that without the cooperation of the Jewish Councils four and a half to six million Jews would not have perished, seems to me almost self-evidently true. Had the Nazis been obliged to use their own manpower to select Jews for the extermination camps, number them, assemble them, ticket their property, and so on, they would not only have rounded up fewer Jews, but they would have felt the drain in their military effort; had Hitler persisted in the Final Solution, at the cost of diverting troops to carry it out, the war might have ended somewhat sooner. It is clear that refusal to cooperate would have met with terrible reprisals, but these reprisals in turn might have demoralized the army and the civilian population both in Germany and in the occupied countries, and chaos, the nightmare of generals, might have been the result. The Final Solution was preferred by the Nazis to mass massacres by shooting because it could be carried out smoothly and efficiently—almost peacefully. And this allowed not only the Germans and the people of occupied countries but the Jews themselves for a long time to remain ignorant of the true destination of the cattle cars moving east, on schedule. To say this is not —horrible charge—to "desire to maximize the role of Jewish leaders in the destruction of European Jewry." Nor is it to show a lack of sympathy for their plight. To speculate on the past, as Abel ought to know, is not to blame (it is too late for that), but merely to wish, to regret, to close your eyes and see it done differently, in some cases to admire.

Smoothly and efficiently—almost peacefully. This was the fearful characteristic of the Final Solution, and for this Eichmann, the transportation expert, was the perfect instrument. Of course six psychiatrists pronounced him normal; he *was* normal and average and therefore perfectly fitted for his job, which was to "make the wheels run smoothly," in both a literal and a figurative sense. His function was to normalize the Final Solution. With his conceit and boasting, his pompous home-made clichés and "winged words," he was at once ridiculous and ordinary, for ordinariness carried to a zenith is absurd. No better example of the mass murderer who is at the same time a perfect family man (Chaplin's Monsieur Verdoux) could be found than the ineffable Eichmann. One of his lawyers said he was like a mailman—a person you see every day on his methodical rounds and seldom notice. Naturally he got along well with Jews; it was part of his job to do so. Among the clichés he incorporated in his personality (to speak of his "character" would be a mistake) was the Some-of-my-best-friends cliché. That he could push this to the point of imagining that he had been converted to Zionism (the Jewish Final Solution) was pushing the logic of the cliché

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to the tenth degree of complacency and self-delusion. How could Abel have missed the irony in Miss Arendt's account of his "conversion"—a dramatic irony, furthermore, since when she tells the reader that Eichmann had been "promptly and forever" made a Zionist by reading a "basic book," she is dryly echoing a speaker who had no idea of the effect on an audience of what he was saying? It was Eichmann, alone in the world, who considered himself a good disciple of Herzl.

According to Abel, Eichmann must have thought about Nazism politically since he thought about Zionism. But Eichmann's "thought" was a parody of the idea of thinking. Had *Mein Kampf* been his "Bible," he might have pressed a flower in it. His Zionist "studies" had a function; they made him an expert, at least in the circles he moved in. They made him "stand out" from his co-workers—the life-object of all mediocrities. As a specialist in Jewish emigration, he was perfectly fitted, when the time came, to arrange Jewish emigration to the next world, to Abraham's bosom. Among his fellow bureaucrats, he might have passed highest in a vocational aptitude test for the new job. A sadist, monster, or demon would not have qualified for the position; these "undesirables" had their place in the Nazi system as jailers and editors of periodicals, but a man with Eichmann's responsibilities could not be a Beast of Belsen or a Julius Streicher. The fact that Eichmann was squeamish, could not bear the sight of blood, was even an "idealist" permitted precisely that distancing from reality that facilitated the administrative task—a distancing that reflected the physical and psychic space between the collective will of the German people in the homeland and its execution in the east. If Eichmann seems to have been cordial, rather than the block of ice described by one witness, this was good public relations, for one of his duties was to allay the suspicions of the Jews and other foreigners he came in contact with, so that they too would be distanced from reality.

Abel does not think that Miss Arendt should have assigned dutifulness—"a positive value"—to Eichmann, as though she were free, reporting the trial, to invent her own Eichmann like a character in fiction. I should have thought dutifulness was a relative value. But in any case the picture of Eichmann as a conscientious clown emerged from Eichmann's testimony long before Miss Arendt wrote her book. Miss Arendt's achievement was to reconcile this virtuous clown with his actions. The portrait she made, of course, is not the "final" Eichmann—there can be no such thing—and some day someone may square the man as he appeared with his actions in some entirely different way. But none of her critics has even tried to do this. To say that he was a

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monster does not meet the problem, unless a monster means someone you cannot explain, which is to declare the problem insoluble. Perhaps Abel thinks Eichmann was a play-actor?

It strikes me now that one of Miss Arendt's offenses was to put Eichmann together with what he did, not in terms of rhetoric, but on a realistic basis, listening to him and watching him—as though this in itself were dangerous, as though the trite proverb, which one can imagine in Eichmann's mouth (for did he not seek his judges' "understanding," by which he must have meant acquittal?) were an established truth and to try to understand Eichmann were to forgive him. Understanding is often a prelude to forgiveness, but they are not the same, and we often forgive what we cannot understand (seeing nothing else to do) and understand what we cannot pardon. Miss Arendt does not forgive Eichmann; indeed she unequivocally passes sentence on him herself, in her last paragraph—an act which may appear arrogant or which may appear as the resolute shouldering of the task of judging, as an individual, the deeds of another individual, i.e., the taking of responsibility, which Eichmann himself always shrank from and in which he revealed his squeamishness and mediocrity.

What satisfaction would it have given Abel and others if Miss Arendt had accepted the word, "monster," from the prosecutor's lips? Calling someone a monster does not make him more guilty; it makes him less so by classing him with beasts and devils ("a person of inhuman and horrible cruelty or wickedness," OED, Sense 4). Such an unnatural being is more horrible to contemplate than an Eichmann—that is, aesthetically worse—but morally an Ilse Koch was surely less culpable than Eichmann since she seems to have had no trace of human feeling and therefore was impassible to conscience. Abel quotes a saying of Kierkegaard on Judas, which shows Judas as comical, and he seems to think that this bears out his argument, since Judas, according to him, was a monster. But Judas was not a monster, though his act was monstrous; he was a man, the twelfth part of humanity, and his sin was that he could betray for thirty pieces of silver, like any common informer. Jesus was uncommon, not Judas. And Judas, unlike a monster, knew that he had sinned and went and hanged himself with a halter. Eichmann too knew himself to be guilty somehow, somewhere ("before God," as he put it), though he held this knowledge far off from himself and was helped in this by the prosecutor, who by charging him with acts of cruelty he did not commit allowed him to feel innocent. What is horrible in Eichmann *is* his ordinariness, including the prompt ability to feel innocent when you are charged with a crime you did not commit

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though you did something infinitely worse, like a person who is accused of murder and robbery and feels put upon because it was not he but his confederate who stole the victim's watch—he "only" committed the murder.

But suppose this were only a quarrel about terms. Suppose by "monster" Abel means someone who is capable of murdering four and a half to six million Jews. There is no argument if that is the definition —only a tautology. But if he means an exceptionally depraved and wicked creature, like Iago or Richard III (his examples), then it is he, it seems to me, who is building Eichmann up and making him an object of aesthetic interest.

The difficulty many people experienced in thinking about the Eichmann trial was to "make the punishment fit the crime." The desire of Abel and other critics is to make the *criminal* fit the crime. And just as any punishment seemed grotesquely small and insignificant beside the murder of millions of helpless people, so the criminal seemed grotesquely small and insignificant. This was not because he had shrunk in the interim. The disproportion between the doer and the deed is a disturbing fact of contemporary history—an effect of advanced technology, like automation. On the Allied side, you had Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where our boys in the bombers and Mr. Truman in the White House were simply incommensurable with what they had done. Not that Mr. Truman and Eichmann can be considered equally as mass murderers; Mr. Truman had a motive which at least was good—the quick ending of the war. It is just that the human scale is no longer in focus, and to measure an Eichmann by the number of his victims and his individual power by their multiplied helplessness is to magnify both him and it.

On the other hand, contrary to what Abel says, Miss Arendt never presents him a "dutiful clerk"; his work was important, indeed crucial, in the Nazi scheme, and he could feel that he, as an individual, was making a significant contribution to the Fuehrer's task. He may or may not have conceived of himself as irreplaceable; if he did this was one of his delusions—a delusion no doubt shared by other Nazi functionaries, each of whom, on the lower levels, was replaceable while all of them together were not. Eichmann was free to quit his desk and his "great responsibilities" at any time, as Miss Arendt shows; no one forced him to do this particular work. Yet his staying on the job, and the zeal he brought to it, do not prove that he liked killing Jews, even at a distance. He liked being a functionary and "necessary," and if this entailed a certain amount of self-sacrifice he liked it even more, for he saw it in the

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preliminary terms Kant laid down in formulating the categorical imperative: that a virtuous action is one done against inclination. That an act done against inclination is therefore virtuous was Eichmann's mistaken understanding or perhaps his rationalization. As Miss Arendt sums up in a terrible flash of insight, "Evil in the Third Reich had lost the quality by which most people recognize it—the quality of temptation." In this passage, it seemed to me, rereading her book, Miss Arendt's scorn and contempt for Eichmann were mingled with a kind of pained, wry-mouthed pity. Eichmann at this time—it was at the end of the war—was pressing for the continuation of the extermination policy, in obedience to the Fuehrer's will, which he had taken as his law, long after many of his colleagues and superiors had seen the end coming and were seeking to save their skins by "saving" Jews. What she pities then in Eichmann (if I do not misread her) is the extent to which he could go on doing evil when all careerist motives had disappeared and against his personal desires—to have stopped the transports to Auschwitz, in his blinkered view, would have been to yield to a temptation. If Abel wants a dramatic parallel for Eichmann, he ought to open his Ibsen. There he can find "idealists" as pernickety, as literal-minded, and nearly as dangerous to humanity. Like the simpletons in Ibsen who talk of the "demands of the ideal," Eichmann was a fool, and what is pitiable in the Eichmann Miss Arendt sees is his foolish consistency, the way in which his inner mechanism, his "soul," continued to tick like some trusty middle-class alarm clock, unaware that it had become an infernal machine and listening only to the sound of its own reliability, signifying that everything was normal.

And if Miss Arendt, a Jew, found it in her heart to pity Eichmann, is this a sin? Is this "aesthetics"? To a Christian, it is ethics; can this be the Gentile "blind spot"? A Christian is commanded not only to pity but to forgive his enemies. It is a hard commandment, and if the Gentile reader detected Miss Arendt showing a trace of pity for the clown that had murdered her own people, he was not shocked but moved to admiration. Abel no doubt would say that she did not extend pity (or charity) to the Jewish leaders, but they were not in need of it to the same degree, any more than they were in need of a great effort of understanding. We all, including Miss Arendt, pity them in a natural motion of feeling, but this is not the pity that counts, ethically speaking, which goes not to those nearest to us (self-pity is scarcely a virtue) but to those farthest away and seemingly beyond the reach of human sympathy. Anybody can feel compassion for the Jewish leaders, even while criticizing their behavior. But "criticizing his behavior" is hardly

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what applies to Eichmann, and it would take a saint, as the saying goes, to feel pity for him.

To me, *Eichmann in Jerusalem,* despite all the horrors in it, was morally exhilarating. I freely confess that it gave me joy and I too heard a paean in it—not a hate-paean to totalitarianism but a paean of transcendence, heavenly music, like that of the final chorus of *Figaro* or the *Messiah.* As in these choruses, a pardon or redemption of some sort was taking place. The reader "rose above" the terrible material of the trial or was borne aloft to survey it with his intelligence. No person was pardoned, but the whole experience was bought back, redeemed, as in the harrowing of hell.

Now it is true that intelligence, mastering the incoherence of violence and suffering, gives it sense, i.e., form, which is necessarily aesthetic. Miss Arendt's book tells a story. Here Abel's criticism just misses something real. Perhaps for Jews it is too soon to have what happened made into a story. They reject the idea that their sufferings made sense, had a plot and a lesson.

For me, however, the plot and the lesson were almost a godsend. For me as a reader, the episodes that stood out were those that dealt with the Jews who were saved—the happy endings. They were the redeeming features of an otherwise unbearable history: the stories of the Jews of Denmark, Bulgaria, and Italy. Possibly I liked them because the Gentiles behaved well in these chapters, but I think it was rather because these chapters showed that it was *possible* to behave well even in extreme situations, and it is worth noting that where the Gentiles behaved well, the Jews did not cooperate. (A contradiction to this is Holland.) But I took the book mainly as a parable for the Gentiles, a lesson in what was possible for the average man, the neighbor, who is not obliged to stay at home with the doors closed when the police cars come for the "Jews" next door—Jews figuratively speaking, since it might happen again, might be happening now, and the Jews of the past may not be the "Jews" of the present or the future. In this parable, as in all parables, there is a contrast. At one extreme there is Eichmann, who stands for all the Eichmanns in the Nazi bureaucracy, all the "little fellows" who asked after the event, "But what could we have done?" To them the Danes furnished an answer, which would have been the same if there had been only one Dane to wear the yellow star and he not a king but a "little fellow." In fact, the King of Denmark is not shown as a king but as the *other* neighbor, at the opposite pole from Eichmann. A whole range of neighbors, good and evil, is glimpsed through the trial in Jerusalem, one of the most evil

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being that Papal Nuncio in Hungary who sent a protest to Horthy against the deportation of the Jews, adding that the Vatican's protest did not spring "from a false sense of compassion."

The parable did not speak, obviously, to the mass of Jews. But it spoke to privileged Jews, those with money and connections, for to the extent that privileged Jews were privileged, entitled to special treatment, endowed with power over others, they in effect were "Gentiles." The lesson, then, as I saw it, was addressed exclusively to the Gentiles, who were on trial through their representative, Eichmann. Some—a few—were exonerated, and no Jew, as a Jew, figured among the accused; the Jews were the witnesses, bearing testimony for or against us.

No Gentile who was an adult in the years of the Final Solution can read *Eichmann in Jerusalem* without some remorse and self-questioning. American Jews, far from the scene then and now, may feel certain misgivings too, reading the book, especially the richer ones who paid large sums of money to the Nazis for the ransom of their relatives and did not concern themselves too greatly with the fate of "ordinary" Jews. Miss Arendt's harshness on this point may seem to them unkind and inappropriate in what they still think of as a time of mourning; it is like somebody who criticizes at a funeral. But the question is whether those who merely grieve for their fellow beings show more compassion or proper feeling than those who in retrospect seek remedies, since to seek remedies implies a continuing concern that what happened shall never happen again. The State of Israel promises that to Jews, politically, by offering them a homeland, an army, and a foreign policy. "You are safe now," it tells them. Miss Arendt is not interested in the safety of Jews but in the safety of humanity. Trying to learn from history, she is thinking ahead on behalf of other "superfluous" people who may be the next "Jews" on someone's list for "resettlement in the east." Yet the official Israeli lesson supposedly taught by the trial—the need for a strong national state—is at very sharp variance with any parable for the Gentiles, i.e., not only non-Jews but all the tribes and the peoples.

As a sample of moral fineness on the part of Miss Arendt's critics, I offer the following sentence from Abel's piece: "If a man holds a gun at the head of another and forces him to kill his friend, the man with the gun will be aesthetically less ugly than the one who out of fear of death has killed his friend and perhaps did not even save his own life." *Forces* him to kill his friend? Nobody by possession of a weapon can force a man to kill anybody; that is his own decision. If somebody points a gun at you and says "Kill your friend or I will kill you," he is *tempting* you to kill your friend. That is all.

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I have already given some indication of Abel's morality as a critic, which permits him the free use of pseudo-paraphrase and downright invention. Now I have space for only three more examples. The first is the shifting use he makes of the word "victims." Miss Arendt criticizes the Jewish leadership; the Jewish leaders became victims; ergo, Miss Arendt criticizes the victims. The implication is that she is criticizing four and a half to six million innocent people. Second, he says he "wondered" when he read Miss Arendt's book why she did not deal with the killing of the Jews in the Ukraine. He did not wonder long; the reason was obvious to him: because this would have destroyed her whole thesis about the role of the Jewish leaders in the extermination of the Jews. She mentions several times the *Einsatzgruppen* shootings of the Jews in the Russian territories: they were shot on the spot together with Communist functionaries, Gypsies, criminals, and insane people. There were no Jewish organizations in Russia, but there were Jewish councils in Poland, yet she does not deal with the extermination of Polish Jewry—a thing about which I wondered myself. But since I genuinely wondered, I was able to find a genuine answer on pages 197-198. The answer is Eichmann; he had nothing to do with the shootings in the East or with the gassing of Polish Jews or the management of Polish ghettoes. He was concerned with the logistics of supplying Jews to the death camps. Here too was where the Jewish Councils came in; they were, so to speak, Eichmann's draft board. Where the Einsatzgruppen shot masses of victims on the spot, there was no transportation problem, no question of selection, and no need for Jewish organizations, even if they had existed. The story of the Jews of the East was separate from the story of Eichmann, to which Miss Arendt restricted herself as much as possible.

An explanation, incidentally, of the ease with which not only Jews but other groups were rounded up and massacred in the Russian territories was offered me by a Polish friend. The Stalinist state apparatus had abolished all other social structures, and when it collapsed after the invasion in the occupied territories, there was nothing, a social void. It was impossible to hide, for there were no hiding-places—no convents, estates, private peasant farms. Most of the Jewish children who survived in Poland were hidden in convents, and villagers used to sell food to Jews hiding in the woods, which would have been impossible in a Russian collective, where everything was known. Stalin's totalitarian state had eliminated privacy.

Returning to Abel, here is the third example. "Why did Eichmann not suspect that the killing of so many defenseless persons was evil?

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This Miss Arendt never tries to explain." But he did suspect; he even knew, and this knowledge, his "conscience," lasted for about four weeks. Eichmann's conscience is the center of her book and explicitly the theme of several chapters. Clearly Abel is aware of this since he alludes to the subject himself, glancingly, in a typical misparaphrase: ". . . according to her view of what happened, the Jews of Europe were so compliant that Eichmann, their executioner, was even denied the opportunity to be conscience-stricken as he sent them off to die." What he says in this sentence is that Miss Arendt explains Eichmann's unsuspicious conscience by the compliancy of the Jews. She does not; the compliancy of the Jewish leadership (not the Jews) was one of many factors she cites that contributed to the extinction of Eichmann's conscience, but the chief responsibility for this, as I read it, outside of Eichmann himself, lay with respectable German society, which remained almost totally silent at the time and only came forward later to wash its hands of the affair.

As the reader can see, the attempt to correct Abel on one point at once brings up another and leads, if one will let it, into a maze. It is like arguing with a hydra.

But I must at least touch on his final charge: the damning evidence he has discovered, where it was lying low, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Frankly, I am not competent and do not have the time or space to get to the bottom of this. But supposing Abel is right and there is a contradiction between the earlier book and the present one, what would it prove? That she was right then and wrong now or vice versa? His triumphant tone seems to announce that she was wrong both times, which is impossible, at least in the terms in which he states her arguments—that the totalitarian state was "all-powerful" and that it was not. However, I do not think she said it was "all powerful" and certainly would not take his word for it. In any case the passage he quotes is about totalitarian *terror,* not about the totalitarian state. And where the terror ruled—in the camps, prisons, and ghettoes—Miss Arendt in *Eichmann and Jerusalem* does not propose that anyone could have done anything but obey.

To be fair, though, to Abel, it does seem to me that Miss Arendt's views about totalitarian rule are not as pessimistic as they were when Stalin was still alive. But to change one's views somewhat, in the light of new evidence and new events (as she does in her chapters on Hungary in the new edition of *The Origins*), is a normal consequence of thought and does not call for you to "recant" or "retract." Unless Abel and those who agree with him are running a private Inquisition or police state.

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GOING TO THEATER

For most theater-goers the theater exists for the discussion of it. The pleasure is more in having done it than in doing it. Like the world of books and music, the theater is a market, in which items—graded by critics and fellow-consumers—are offered for sampling. But unlike the opera or the ballet or even, for some people, reading, the theater is something to be "covered," a regular feature of their commitment to metropolitan civilization. And the New York theater bears the stamp of its mechanically attending middle-class audience at every turn. Like most of the people who make up its audience, most serious theatrical productions put on in New York are lumpish, earnest, timid, hypocritical, well-meaning, entirely calculated, and boring.

There are times, to tell the truth, when I'm convinced that it's all the fault of the intermissions. For me, at least, the intermissions sum up everything boring and diluted about the theater. (Think of being *forced* to walk out two or three times during a movie!) Intermissions also induce in playwrights an entirely false and unnecessary type of dramatic punctuation: the curtain line. Everything in the conditions of theater-going leads to emotional triviality, to the dissipation of serious feeling. It is not enough to reply that other live performing arts—symphony concerts, the opera, the ballet—have the same formal conditions of attendance. For I would wager that all of these have, and rightly, a more enthusiastic, spirited audience than does the theater today. And with the movies, the contrast is even more extraordinary. It is simply a fact that ten times as many good American movies are made each year as there are passable productions of plays mounted on and off-Broadway. But, surely, the liveliness of the movies today, when compared with the theater, is also immeasurably enhanced by the liveliness of the way one goes to the movies. While the informal conditions of movie-going create an inspired, spontaneous audience ("Hey! Let's go to the movies!"), the formal conditions of theater-going perpetuate an audience which is already deadened, prepared in some kind of emotional formaldehyde.

Several recent successes on Broadway offer a number of cases of the

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peculiarly ghoulish transaction between a bad play and a bad audience. One such exemplary instance is John Osborne's *Luther,* directed by Tony Richardson and starring the rugged Albert Finney as the Great Spiritual Reformer. Osborne's play is unremittingly vulgar and slapdash in its ideas and its writing. Rumor has it that it was only a few weeks in the writing after Osborne read a couple of psychoanalytic studies of Luther's anality, Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* and Norman Brown's *Life Against Death.* Be that as it may, the reaction of the audience is worthy of Osborne's play. The key moment is the fit which the young Luther has in the first act—presumably an excruciating stomach-ache, but looking more like epilepsy. There is a great deal of groaning, doubling over, retching, and belly-clutching, which climaxes impressively with Finney falling straight on his back from a standing position. In most performances, at the conclusion of this fit, the audience applauds—as they do after a strenuous *coloratura* aria or a lengthy *entrechat*—and the play has to stop. Though I have always felt that anyone who applauds during a performance (be it an opera, a ballet, or a play) should be promptly expelled from the theater for disorderly conduct, I have to admit that the audience's reaction to Finney's tour de force is, in a way, perfectly just. *Luther,* to its credit handsome as a picture-book (excellent lighting, bare effective sets), is phony, absolutely phony to the core. Not one of a hundred of the people who attend this play could possibly have the slightest interest in Luther and his real problems. What draws them is the solemn, edifying staging and the gimmick of Luther's constipation. *Luther* only pretends to be about Luther; it is really about physicalness, which is why Finney is applauded for having beautiful convulsions. The power of Finney's over-rated performance lies in what made it right for him to play the sexy proletarian lout in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and that wonderful piece of 18th century beefcake, *Tom Jones.* Add to Finney's manifest virility the trappings of neurosis and an ungainly psychosomatic disorder, and you have a supreme instance of the modern theater audience's craving to level down. The Great Spiritual Reformer turns out to be the Great Neurotic. Let us discover neurosis behind the spiritual, as we have discovered the spiritual in ugliness and neurosis. Amen. The Broadway audience loves nothing better than a cut-rate job of debunking, preferably masking as psychoanalytic *gemütlichkeit.* In *Luther,* it can get a quick educational TV-type briefing on A Great Moment in Western History: the Reformation. "My son, don't you see what could happen out of all this? . . . A time will come when a man will no longer be able to say, 'I speak Latin and am a Christian' and go his way in peace." At the

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same time, it can rediscover the commonness of someone whom it might have been persuaded to admire. (Compare such genuine and psychologically sophisticated films about the spiritual vocation as Rossellini's *The Flowers of St. Francis* and Bresson's *The Diary of a Country Priest.*) "Aren't you coming to bed?" says Luther's ex-nun wife in the particularly hokey last scene of the play. "Shan't be long," replies he, brooding over Faith and Works on a pedestal in the middle of the bare stage. "Oh, Martin," she sighs, "you're a funny man. . . . Don't be long now, Martin." Mr. and Mrs. Luther turn out to be just folks, like everyone in the audience. A successful Broadway play must prove our warm, fearful, frail, dirty-minded, lovable, common humanity—with a little smut and a little culture thrown in.

Edifying cynicism—or, alternatively, sensationalism masking as cultural exposé—is of course the particularly successful formula of Edward Albee. In the case of last year's smash *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf,* it was the discovery of how coarse and vicious and foul-mouthed a pair of college professors and their wives can be. ("It's just like any marriage," I swear I overheard a man explain to his wife after the performance, "only a little more so.") But that play, at least, had a certain (vile) integrity. Albee's new play, *The Ballad of the Sad Café,* directed by Alan Schneider, which is based on the sententious novella of Carson McCullers (*it,* at least, had hardly any dialogue), is a work of such dedicated meretriciousness that it leaves one breathless. Take a coy, elegaic narrator from *Our Town,* a giantess from *Moon for the Misbegotten,* and a rural store from *Orpheus Descending.* Mix them all together (alas, Albee couldn't work Arthur Miller into the brew; *his* material is so unredeemably urban), add a nasty dwarf who is beloved by the giantess, and you have—a Broadway hit. It is a hit which, I should guess, owes its success almost exclusively to one of the most ignoble feelings ever to animate a Broadway audience—the wish to see a deformed person without being seen back. One cannot blame Carson McCullers for the nastiness of this play, though Albee has been faithful enough to her book. But entirely different canons of taste govern the use of the grotesque in literature—where one does not see, or in any way directly sense—as distinct from the stage or film. And also what constitutes a possible literary style on the page, to the eye, is something quite different from what pleases the ear. True, Mrs. McCullers is capable of such lines as: "First of all, love is a joint experience between two persons—but the fact that it is a joint experience does not mean that it is a similar experience for the two people involved." And of a ponderous distinction between the lover and the beloved, which ends

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with this admonition: "Let it be added here that this lover about whom we speak need not necessarily be saving for a wedding ring—this lover can be a man, woman, child or indeed any human creature on this earth." But it is one thing to read vacuities like these, another, far more fearsome, to hear them recited intact in the tony accents of Roscoe Lee Brown, the Brooks Brothers Negro narrator camping invisibly among the poor white trash who plunge headlong into their "calamity."

To this awful farrago of tautology and sensationalism, the audience responded with an unctuous voyeurism. One might describe it as a kind of complacent titillation, made even more possible by the artiness and the artificiality of the production. Everyone is only pretending. Of course, the dwarf Cousin Lymon is another, and sinister, matter, since the actor Michael Dunn who plays him really is a dwarf. Two entirely different realities—a theatrical sensationalism and a nude and absolutely real deformity—bisect each other on the stage of the Martin Beck theater. But, however modified by the unsettling presence of the dwarf, phoniness wins the day. The play does not really shock; it only (and the audience knows this perfectly well) plays at shocking. What is wrong with Albee's work—or Tennessee Williams', for that matter—is not the emphasis on freakishness, sexual perversion, or the like. It is the insincere, shallow use of this material. The perverse situations are not really probed. They are used, rather, as a conventional device for exciting an audience. Compared with, say, either the hieratic and florid perversities of Genet or such stylish trashy delights as certain films of Robert Aldrich (*Kiss Me Deadly, Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*), Albee's dark arts reveal themselves as arbitrary and tame.

The sensationalism of the events in *The Ballad of the Sad Café* is ersatz shock, because the only real shocks in art are those that pertain to form. The real shocks, which the American theater lacks, are those of a bold image carried to the point of a genuine sensuous assault upon the audience. Sometimes one can locate exactly the deficiency. Thus, the main effect on me of John Dexter's intelligent production of Arnold Wesker's rather moving *Chips With Everything* was to make me appreciate the last production of the recently slain but, one hopes, shortly to be resurrected Living Theater, *The Brig*. All the Living Theater productions had something hysterical and gross about them; and *The Brig* was no exception, though in this genre probably the best thing the group had ever done. I was of two minds about *The Brig* when I saw it last year, for it seemed to be so well done, though it was not a play at all, but something between a ballet and a demonstration. But compared with *Chips With Everything*, the relentlessness and

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monotony of *The Brig* seemed much less of a fault. Both casts were drilled by professional military men, and the theatrical substance of both plays consists of the rituals of saluting, bed-making, running, drilling, taking punishment, target practice, etc. But there the difference ends. Next to the stunning brutalities of a Marine prison scored, (rather than written), by Kenneth H. Brown and staged by Judith Malina, the ordeals of an RAF training camp seemed absolutely idyllic. *The Brig* was good because it almost obliterated its own content, and dared to be mainly its vehement form. *Chips* is first of all a story. While *The Brig* wishes to cause pain to its audience, *Chips With Everything* cannot ever cease to wish to be charming. *Chips* is not a bad play, just a weak unconvincing one. In contrast to the calculated falseness of *Luther* and *Ballad of the Sad Café,* though, it did make a certain modest and authentic use of the resources of the theater. There is the excellent climax of the Christmas party scene, when the cadets, led by Pip, (agreeably played by Gary Bond), refuse to cater to their officers' patronizing view of lower-class culture (rock 'n' roll, etc.) and start singing a folksong which rises to a defiant crescendo of clapping and syncopated beating on glasses, cups, and tables. The meaning of this act as a piece of defiance—that is, as part of the plot of the play—was lost in the beauty and vigor of the act as a moment of sensuous spectacle. (There is a similarly wonderful scene of impromptu music-making at the close of Kurosawa's film of Gorky's *The Lower Depths.*) The other good scene in *Chips With Everything* is also wordless. It is the scene when, again led by Pip, the cadets undertake a raid on the compound where the camp's coal is stored, there being no more coal in the group's hut to make tea. The entire maneuver is carried out before the audience: it requires scaling a wire fence with split-second timing so that no one will be caught by the guard on his rounds. But even these good scenes were not enough because of the general softness of the play, exemplified by the entirely implausible surrender of Pip to the paternalism of the officer class from which he has tried to escape.

About the only Broadway production which had enough of a share of theatrical vigor to merit some sustained praise was Tony Richardson's staging of Brecht's *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui,* which opened in mid-November and closed after five performances. It is just possible that *Arturo Ui* (the title as foreshortened on Broadway) closed so hastily because of the virtues of Richardson's production, a great many of whose effects are reported to have been borrowed from the staging by the Berliner Ensemble. But I rather imagine it was simply because Brecht is still too austere a taste for the Broadway audience. Brecht's

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play is high-spirited, cartoonish in its political ideas, and full of playful literary parodies. Besides the strained parallel between the Capone-type hero and his gangster lieutenants, and Hitler and his entourage, Brecht will give over an entire scene to a parody of something from *Faust* or *Richard III* or a play of Schiller. Unconventional sex and edifying subjects, preferably historical (like Luther or T. E. Lawrence or Thomas More or Job), are almost all the Broadway audience has yet been coached to see as subjects of serious drama. Brecht is too witty. He has not been marketed and sold properly, though I'm sure he will be.

The characteristic thing about Richardson's production of *Arturo Ui* was its patchwork extravagances, so much better than this same director's smooth, homogenized staging of *Luther*. *Arturo Ui* was grimly bad at times, in the worst Broadway social-seriousness manner—as in the speech of the Negress who crawls along the curtain begging, in the name of humanity, that Arturo be stopped. (The most memorable instance of this type of lame attempt to coerce an audience is the "Attention must be paid!" speech of Willy Loman's widow at the end of *Death of a Salesman*.) Another embarrassing moment was the Shakespearean ghost soliloquy of the murdered Ernesto Roma—Ernest Roehm—helplessly delivered by Murvyn Vye stripped to the waist and smeared with what looked like mercurochrome. And the abominable doggerel translation (or adaptation, as it was called in the program) by George Tabori didn't help much, either. What the production had, however, was two great assets. One was the splendid performance of the title role by the Canadian actor, Christopher Plummer. The scene of the elecution lesson, in which all the familiar body idioms of Hitler are assembled, one by one, was a brilliant piece of acting; as was Ui's final speech, representing the 1934 Nuremberg rally. (Plummer's, rather than Finney's, is the performance of the season.) The other asset of the production was a taste for lusty stage effects. *Arturo Ui* had the courage to be vulgar, to assault its audience—and sometimes it worked. The entire stage was framed by a width of flashing lights, which lit up at the beginning and end of each scene. Guns that were fired onstage sent off a rich acrid smell and a visible yellowish smoke drifting about the auditorium. The best moment was in the opening of the scene which is supposed to represent both the St. Valentine's Day Massacre and the Roehm purge, when Arturo and his cohorts arrive at the garage. Their car drives onstage and a pair of blinding headlights shines for several moments right into the audience's eyes.

What particularly damaged *Arturo Ui,* however—and most plays

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on and off-Broadway—was poor acting. Outside of the British imports, even the most professional-looking (as opposed to pleasing) productions were no more than acceptably acted in their major roles. There is an ugly, hard style on Broadway, the result, it may be, of too much thought and crystallization. Colleen Dewhurst, playing Miss Amelia in *Ballad of the Sad Café,* seemed to have gone to the Pavlovian school of acting—melting and grinning like Katherine Hepburn in *Summertime,* only seventy-five pounds heavier, the instant Cousin Lymon scooted into view, grimacing and snarling the moment unwanted husband Marvin Macy set a foot on the stage. I do not single out Miss Dewhurst because she was so bad. On the contrary, she was, among the American actors to be seen this season, one of the best. But the fact is that the level of American acting is low. The memorable performances on Broadway—one that I haven't mentioned was by Peter Bull as Tetzel in a remarkable scene in *Luther* in which he sells indulgences to the theater audience—are not by Americans. One simply gets used to the fact that, in the average Broadway production, no one below the one or two principals can act. Indeed, one is lucky if the principals can act. And things are even worse off Broadway. Most off-Broadway productions seem committed to amateurism. One is spared that bellowing, stagey voice of the Broadway theater, "projecting" all the way to the last row in the second balcony. But that's only because the theaters off-Broadway are so small.

On Broadway, poor plays are often given better productions than they deserve. Off-Broadway, good plays and merely prententious ones alike are served up with the same bemusing shoddiness. In last year's mocked-up repertoire of "absurd plays" at the Cherry Lane there were productions of Genet's *Deathwatch* and Beckett's *Endgame* that made it literally impossible to detect—unless one had seen them done elsewhere—that these were, possibly, beautiful plays. For this reason, I am reluctant even to mention the current production of Ugo Betti's *Corruption in the Palace of Justice.* I had never read or seen this play before seeing it last month at the Cherry Lane. It's now my impression that this is a dull, banal, pretentious play, done with all the heavy-handed flatness it deserves. I read the play in Italian after seeing it, wondering if perhaps it was the fault of the translation. I still don't know. If it is a good play, I won't know until this performance is erased by another.

There is one good off-Broadway production, however, and it is probably the only thing around that one can recommend without qualification. Genet's *The Maids* is at the new Aldana Theater (One Sheridan Square), directed by Aldo Bruzzichelli, who will also put on Genet's

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new play *The Screens*. What makes Bruzzichelli's version of *The Maids* so good is that he has concentrated as much on the use of the actors' bodies as on the text. The fact that *The Maids* is a one-acter, without intermission, helps to sustain the seriousness of the production. The action is designed to proceed without arbitrary interruptions. There is a continuous sexual energy on the three-quarter stage, which comes from a studied and unhurried movement, from a stylization and heightening of gesture. The best moments of the play are when the text is allowed to subside into silence. Bruzzichelli's staging begins boldly, in a long mute sequence when the two sisters, Solange and Claire, enter their mistress' room and begin to play the game of impersonating her; it ends with a tableau of Solange standing, hands crossed as if manacled, and Claire sitting with the cup of poisoned tea at her lips—thus omitting the final speech of Solange delivered *while* Claire is drinking the tea. Bruzzichelli's interpretations and cuts are certainly open to question. The play is changed radically by making the maids young girls, and their mistress an affected, nervous, middle-aged woman; according to Genet's text, the mistress is twenty-five, and the maids are in their thirties. Nevertheless it is a valid, if not the only interpretation—strongly and intelligently acted by Kathleen Widdoes as Claire, Lee Grant as Solange, and Eunice Anderson as Madame. Kathleen Widdoes is particulary extraordinary, with her lithe, childish, sexy body and face which beautifully set off Lee Grant's dark, furious inwardness.

Susan Sontag

NOTE: IRVING HOWE'S article, "The Costs of History," in our Fall 1963 issue, is the Introduction to **The Basic Writings of Trotsky**, Random House.

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BOOKS

BLACK-MAILER

THE PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS. By Norman Mailer. Putnam. $5.00.

The question of Norman Mailer's real quality still appears to be open; kept open, by Mailer himself, in such a way that an unduly privileged appraisal seems to be called for each time he appears in print. He deliberately keeps the issue in doubt, provocatively unknitting his own reputation even as he makes it, gaining in the long run by forcing the public to attend to the promiscuously unpredictable drama which he has made out of his own development. He is not, it would seem, content simply to go along with his own talent as it stands, prodigious though it be. Determined "to settle for nothing less than a major revolution in the consciousness in our time" he beefs up the already rich, regenerative violence of his challenge with every conceivable stunt and self-advertisement in the book. For a start he employs himself without mercy, recruiting his public and even his private personality to the service of the campaign. He pushes his way, like a less modest Hitchcock, into the center of his own productions, often completely upstaging his best literary creations. Following the Patterson-Liston fight, for example, he felt moved (during what seems to have been an almost religious trance induced by a party in the house of Hugh Hefner) to gate-crash events and put on a press conference, during the course of which he would explain why his previously advertised prophesies on the outcome of the fight had gone so strangely awry. Before he had a chance, however, to make with these metaphysical hindsights, he was removed by the officials. The rumpus which this created gained him admission to the presence of the "champ" himself—close enough even to exchange some ruggedly amiable threats yet. Close enough, he will one day think, to make changes (be they never so subtle) in Liston's brain; enough to influence and perhaps even determine the outcome of some of his future bouts. For Mailer strongly believes, in a magical way almost, in the potency of his own presence; bringing changes, not just in the consciousness, but more hopefully, in the actual events of our time. He

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suggests for example, with tentative self-mockery, that his articles on Kennedy possibly determined the result of the election. The narrow margin makes this an entertaining, even if somewhat remote possibility. Few writers however would nakedly brave the scorn of such a claim. And unless he is merely gaga and actually out of his skull, one is forced to concede a harshly qualified admiration for his challenging and idiotically ambitious self-exposure. For unless he *is* insane there is a certain ludicrous magnificence in coming on like a pompous bloody fool in the service of a passionate evangelical commitment. And in fact, when confronted with *The Presidential Papers,* one *is* tempted, to put the whole thing down to madness and gratefully concede the flashing dotty brilliance of some of its better parts. The rest of the text does resonate with paranoid effects—the turgid philosophical terms, the delusions of grandeur, the distorted ideas of reference, the pedantic self-annotations and so on are all bag and baggage of literate autism. However, there is something repulsive in making a clinical judgement of this sort. And because, when the chips are down, one must, to a significant degree, seriously endorse the program which is embedded in the midst of all his rococo nonsense, it is necessary to judge Mailer as sane; and to assess him, whether favorably or not, at least *in the terms* of his own self-evaluation.

Without this plea of insanity Mailer stands accused of monstrous uncouthness and although this is to some extent exonerated by the intermittent brilliance of his performance, he surely deserves to be deported for committing such a boorish public nuisance. And yet, at the same time, if one looks at the actual substance of those extenuating passages one can see that they are more than just isolated virtues, to be offset against the prevailing villainy. They are part of the villainy and even a justification of it. In other words the boorish exhibitionism cannot simply be dismissed, with its general ugliness merely diminished by the excellence of the rest. Mailer clearly insists that both be taken into consideration. Not simply as credit and debit from which a final balance can be derived; but as one, integrated assault on modern sensibility. The bullying and the brilliance are the yin and yan of Mailer's reforming effort and one is forced, I think, to recognize a daring capacity for absurd self-exposure which is all of a piece with the author's preference for life as an "existential" ordeal of testing challenges.

He has settled for nothing less than the unconditional surrender of the entrenched values of modern American culture. The uncouth self-importance of his attack must at least be considered in the light

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of this aim. No other writers, nominally committed to the same ideals of courage and regenerated manliness, would today launch themselves with so little reserve. Mailer keeps none of his shots in the locker. He observes, for example, none of the usual shyness in bringing out some of those pompous personal philosophies which all of us secretly entertain but never dare to reveal. He openly admits, for instance, that he has for years run for president in the privacy of his mind: and there is, after all, something quite disarming about such humorless honesty. The very tastelessness of his total style with all its self-advertisement, clotted jargon and so on add up to a certain barbarous bulk to be set against the general fastidiousness of all-around.

And yet. Perhaps this is too generous an appraisal. Under cover of the assault as advertised one feels that Mailer is pushing for another settlement. A more personal claim for unquestioned greatness. He has been running, not just in the privacy of his mind, not just for President of the United States; he has also been running for President of everything else, President of the World, President of Beefcake and President of Contemporary Sensibility. And in this campaign he has made a fatal confusion between ends and means, jumping over himself to achieve the desired reputation before his actual talents have accumulated the necessary credentials. In other words, he is in a hurry to establish his claims to greatness without having to wait upon the natural season of his own supposed genius. Since art is long and life today seems impossibly short he feels pressed to set up the hollow shell of an heroic reputation which can stand proxy in the pantheon until his actual achievements have caught up with his ambitions. The reason for this, reflecting though it may upon Mailer's own dizzy arrogance, says something too about the hectic vanity of the modern life with which he finds himself so angrily at odds. Modern society, greedy and vain as it is, is impatient of the due process of literary evaluation. In a spirit of corrupt and premature generosity it likes to celebrate "greatness" too long in advance of the necessary tests of time. Mailer has conspired with this social eagerness for instant heroes and by running a line of preposterous copy on himself he has established his candidacy for future high office; and by means of the advertisements for himself he has constructed an estimation which is by rights the elected property of the future. It shows in him the same indecently hasty vanity as Arnold Bennett's hero who fakes his own death just in order to peek in on and dishonestly enjoy his own posthumous honors.

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Consider for a moment, though, his actual excellence, all mad claims for more aside. Forgetting also the wearysome masculinity of all that gruff gymnasium chat. For one thing Mailer is an outstanding photographic reporter of the American scene. In two essays here, he creates pictures of the urban scene which have just the same off-center truth as the photographs of Robert Frank. Like Frank, he composes his snaps with a wonderfully contradictory sense of proportion, in which the main figure gets pushed off to the margin of a garish night scene, judiciously blurred, as if to indicate some mysterious marginal urgency. In the report on the 1960 Democratic Convention in Los Angeles we get Kennedy entering the Biltmore Hotel, half seen on the edge of a tableau which is largely taken up with the fags and bums of Pershing Square. This sharply focused, wide-angle view of events allows him to include some shrewdly chosen architectural detail. It sets his human figures as ironic miniatures in the redwoods and canyons of the city wilderness. There are some wonderful group portraits, too, especially those of the ring-side mobsters in the Patterson-Liston piece. "They were the most intricate faces one could find this side of Bellini or Carpaccio, chins with hooks and chisels, nostrils which seem to screw the air up into the head, thin-lipped mouths like thin nosed pliers, eyes which behind their dark glasses scrutinized your interior. . . . Yes, those two rows of seats made up a right angle of *don capos* and a few very special Catholic priests, thin, ascetic, medieval in appearance. . . ."

He is quick to see also the human physique as an envelope which betrays the moral style which it encloses. Liston, for example, with "his sleek body, fully muscled but round, shaped by pleasure as much as by work" contrasted with Patterson whose "dry, dedicated body" stands as a cipher for all those timid churchy ambitions of the Negro who wishes, unlike the pantherish delinquent Liston, to make his way in the path of the white middle class. This sort of Reichian character analysis has a flashing allegorical boldness in its context and in fact, throughout these two essays, it is Mailer's general capacity for sustaining and developing powerful allegorical metaphors which carries the day.

The other derivatives of Reich are less attractive and often downright idiotic. His identification of cancer, for example, with the metastatic chaos of modern life is fine so long as it stays within the boundaries of metaphor. As it is, Mailer seems to believe with Reich that cancer *is* actually a product of modern frustration. He gets cranky in other words, just as he does about contraception, so that quite sud-

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denly in the middle of a perfectly legitimate and sustained passion he begins to employ the food-fad, animist idioms of a Californian Birchite. But this is where we came in.

Jonathan Miller

AFTER THE DAISY CHAIN

THE GROUP. By Mary McCarthy. Harcourt, Brace and World. $5.95.

The heroines of Miss McCarthy's new novel are nine members of the Vassar Class of '33—eight friends, Kay, Pokey, Helena, Dottie, Lakey, Polly, Libbie, and Priss, who had roomed together in the South Tower of Main Hall, and one outsider, noisy Norine Schmittlapp, who had envied them. The novel reports, records, reflects (as in a mirror) a succession of events in their lives during the seven years after graduation.

The Group is very much a *public* novel: that is, it draws into itself the texture of "real" life and society, the world outside the novel, at the same time and in the same manner as it invents a "fictional" life and society within the world of the novel itself. The former is meant to support and reinforce the latter, to validate it as true. The two kinds of life, "real" and "fictional," are so closely intermingled that it becomes (the novelist hopes) impossible to distinguish between them. Of course it must be borne in mind that something like this happens in any novel—a woman can graduate from Vassar and get married as plausibly in art as in life—but in the public novel the confusion between art and life becomes an esthetic principle, a philosophy and method of composition. As we have seen, Dottie Renfrew and her mother (invented characters) meet for lunch at the Ritz (actual hotel) in Boston. Why not the Bristol? Because there is no hotel of that name in Boston. In the dining room of the Ritz, which Miss McCarthy names but does not describe—the mere fact is sufficient for her purpose—the Renfrew ladies partake not only of Ritz food but of Ritz reality. We eat at the Ritz, therefore we exist. And the lunch is a fact that defines at the same time that it validates the invented experience. Miss McCarthy is as alert to social discriminations as Saint-Simon: if her method does not allow the Renfrews to have lunch in a

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fictitious restaurant, neither can they be made to cross the Public Garden at a diagonal and eat at Child's. As it is, the lunch at the Ritz is one more fact, like her lost virginity, to add to Dottie's *dossier*; the sum of such facts is her character.

This process I have been describing is continuous throughout the novel. Fact and pseudo-fact are juxtaposed at every level of experience: when, for example, we are shown a girl brushing her hair, we are told that she is using an Ogilvy Sisters' hairbrush. Does it matter? Yes—that is, it matters to the character: she is a girl who *would* use such a hairbrush; just as another would wear "brown lizard pumps," or another would buy furniture at Macy's Forward House. All of Miss McCarthy's characters are caught up in the "thingness" of existence; in this they are more representative of the age of advertising than of Vassar.

Vassar dominates, however. *The Group,* it needs to be said, is *not* a novel about the 1930's, any more than it is *about* the public themes (breast versus bottle feeding, etc.) that concern its characters. Rather, as the title emphasizes, it is about the group, nine Vassar girls in the process of becoming Vassar alumnae. First there is Vassar, which is its own version of Eden—a world without Adam—and afterwards there is the world at large, a bleak panorama of attritions, compromises, disappointments, defeated expectations, condescension, hostility, and men. At the reception after Kay's wedding, one of the guests, a "radio man," ironically proposes a toast "To the Class of '33." "Tiddly as she was Priss could tell that she and her friends, through no fault of their own, had awakened economic antagonism. Vassar girls in general were not liked, she knew, by the world at large; they had come to be a sort of symbol of superiority." And how unfair this is, for "Priss herself was a dyed-in-the-wool liberal; it ran in the blood. Her mother was a Vassar trustee . . ." Miss McCarthy, herself Vassar '33, in her essay "The Vassar Girl" (1951) tells us how as a freshman she was "filled with the pride and the glory of belonging to the very best college in America. This feeling," she continues, "did not really leave me during four years in college; Vassar has a peculiar power of conveying a sense of excellence." It is the comedy and misfortune of the group that each of them carries this sense of excellence (deserved or not) into the world beyond Poughkeepsie. Vassar colors all their experiences and determines their values. "He was more intelligent than she was," one of them decides about a man who has asked her to marry him, "but he had not had a Vassar education." Nevertheless, she accepts him. Another, concerned that her husband is not succeeding

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in his work, wishes that "he would let her give him the Binet and some of the personality tests she had tried on the group at Vassar." "Extend your antennae, girls," they are told by a favorite teacher, and they do, with a rapturous, idiot self-confidence as the gates of Eden clang shut behind them. Then, gradually, retraction occurs, the blunting of a sense-and-sensibility apparatus that was never (to be candid) absolutely first-class. They decline to their ordinary American fate. I am reminded of a bleak declaration in a Harvard Class Report some years ago: "Life, since Cambridge, has been a disappointment." "Vassar had inspired us with the notion that the wide wide world was our oyster," Miss McCarty remarks in her essay. Then (next sentence) "A few years later, a census was taken, and it was discovered that the average Vassar graduate had two-plus children and was married to a Republican lawyer." It is this sense of anti-climax, of accomodation to "the long littleness of life" that haunts *The Group* and gives its often hilarious comedy a depth and pathos it would not otherwise have.

Pathos is to be inferred, not encountered face-to-face: the method of the novel does not allow for its direct representation. The girls would claim, on the whole, to be happy and successful, and Miss McCarthy pretends to believe them. Her style is ventriloquial and colloquial: the author's voice is silent throughout, we are meant to have no sense of *her* on the page. Instead there is the chirp, twitter, gasp, and gabble of the group, betraying themselves to us in a remorseless cliché of speech, thought, and circumstance:

> Last winter she had discovered a beauteous young man who taught English at one of the private schools and who knew a nifty picnic spot that could be reached for five cents on the subway: Pelham Bay Park; you took the Lexington Avenue Express to the end of the line and then got out and walked. Libby would pack a lunch of cucumber sandwiches, hardboiled eggs, and big fat strawberries, and they would throw in a leather volume of poetry to read aloud after they had eaten and were lying on a steamer blanket in a sheltered spot overlooking the water. Libby was crazy about the Cavalier poets, and he doted on the Elizabethans, especially Sidney and Drayton ("Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part—Nay I have done, you get no more of me . . ."). He told Libby she looked just the way he imagined Penelope Rich (Penelope Devereux that *was,* the sister of the Earl of Essex), the Stella of Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella." "Stella" had blond hair and dark eyes, from which came killing darts, like Libby's. The combination of brown eyes and gold hair was the Elizabethan *ne plus*

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> *ultra* of womanly beauty. This spring, Libby could hardly wait for the first pussy willows for those picnics to start again.

Miss McCarthy's mastery of the intonations and vocabulary of what one might call "educated-banal" is a remarkable *tour de force,* sustained as it is for almost four hundred pages. Only very rarely does she falter in her discipline: then the *author* enters, and one hears: "Libby's red open mouth, continually gabbling, was like a running wound in the middle of her empty face." Or, describing Norine: "Her eyes, which were a light golden brown, were habitually narrowed, and her handsome blowzy face had a plethoric look, as though darkened by clots of thought." At such moments one is forcibly reminded of what has been sacrified to obtain the virtuoso style-that-is-no-style of *The Group.*

William Abrahams

POETRY AND TRUTH

FINAL SOLUTIONS. Poems by Frederick Seidel. Random House, New York. $3.75.
POEMS 2. By Alan Dugan. Yale University Press. $3.50.
NEW POEMS. By Robert Graves. Doubleday, New York. $2.95.

Mr. Seidel lives between two worlds. The burden of Jewishness, or of the past itself, encroaches on the blander, more liberal future. Both past and present are unreal to him, the past an abstract fate, the present an abstract freedom. Born too late to identify actively with what happened to his people, he cannot any better identify with the "Greek" culture of Harvard. Even Harlem is preferable to Harvard, at least the exotic Harlem he imagines. But there is no "final solution": his problem (and the so-called Jewish question) is simply that of consciousness *in extremis.*

Because a poet lives this, it affects speech in its essence. His disturbance reaches into the activity of signification itself. It is not, however, easy to tell whether the disturbance is the poet's own or that of his personae. Many of the poems in this volume are dramatic monologues, but others are simply indirect monologues. There is, in any case, a flow

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of associations which moves with great speed, as if it were dangerous to dwell on any one emergent meaning:

> *He heard the engines screaming for more air.*
> *He pushed and drifted—waking smelled like steam.*
> *Below him were the blank and linked-up roofs*
> *Of suburbs . . . showers, crematoria . . .*
> *The john tiles where his father's soft eyes worked*
> *The crossword puzzle jackpots, poetry*
> *Of Jews, ten thousand dollars for first prize.*
> *Red bullets to the brain, the Seconal. . . .*
> *The world was turning into dawn, just as*
> *The jet plane's sixteen landing wheels set down.*
> ("A Year Abroad")

Though we can work out why "waking smelled like steam," why the engines are described as screaming for air, and scream is echoed in steam, the relation between thoughts remains both "blank" and "linked-up," just like the roofs described by the airplane passenger. Not till we understand that the mind represented here is sick in a very ordinary way does the real dilemma emerge. The mind's disease is the analogue of aphasia in the realm of meaning: like the stutterer who wants to say something and can't, so the poet wants to mean something and can't. And, to complicate things, his eloquence is enabled by his semantic stutter. If his meaning were effable, it would be so terrifying or final that utterance might cease. "Showers, crematoria" must remain in this relation of disrelation. The collapse of both things into a single meaning is the nightmare.

The most apparent sign of the tension I am describing is a claustrophobic atmosphere, created partly by a style of sheer aggregation. A further sign is the absence of ordinary, airy, neutral Nature—of something outside us, subject to our thoughts yet aloof, and which cannot be humanized. Nature, as filtered through these poems, is *contaminated* by meanings, as if its elemental power to ablute them, to purge us and our images, had failed. An island that's locked in by the sea is "a case of vaginismus," the Seine "scratches itself lovingly along the quais," the moon "brassiered and soap-sleek" seems to "stink" with the allure of a church-imposed chastity. The formal reason for some of these figures is that they are part of dramatic monologues, part of specific mental situations, but they are too alike in their idiosyncrasy not to point to the author or to a general human dilemma.

These monologues, in fact, despite Robert Lowell's commendation of them for creating real and independent people, are not in the least

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productive of "otherness": Seidel turns the genre of the monologue against itself by stifling his characters in their own thoughts. In "The Heart Attack," for instance, a man dies during a dream in which his dead mistress harangues him, and as he dies the dream triumphantly describes his return to its womb. There are many other envelopments of this kind, but "The Heart Attack" is especially skillful because it identifies, fatally, dream and woman. No wonder, therefore, that Seidel's images of freedom move us with unexpected power, as at the end of the following poem:

> *Plaintiff is awarded the Judge! Passerine,*
> *Perched on branch and vine,*
> *Plaintiff spreads its smallish wings—*
> *Brownish white, whitish brown—and sings.*
> ("A Negro Judge")

The artistic implications of *Final Solutions* are, on the whole, less important than the existential ones. This is a first book with many flaws: of economy, of gratuitous associations, of point of view splintered or not sustained, and of indulgence in stray personal allusions. (I fail to see the necessity of some of the Hadrianic references, or why in "The Walk There" an adulterer becomes a connoisseur of Vergil.) It is, in fact, several books in one and with poems so condensed that they are often self-defeating. Yet against these flaws I must set one absolute sign of literary talent: not only occasional successes like the portrait of "The Coalman" (still inspired perhaps by Lowell) but an omnipresent energy of words and observations. Seidel makes us taste the "thousand bitters" which characterize a mind beyond the clarity of innocence and struggling toward the clarity of maturity.

Except for a few silly poems, which I shall consider as padding and ignore, Mr. Dugan's second book, following closely on his first, shares its distinction. It is perhaps less a second book than a second installment. Not many of the poems are innovative or profound, but they are almost everything else: clear, sustained, witty, and self-delighting. The economy of their style is often remarkable. It is not the dense economy of the metaphorical poet, however. For spareness is continually relieved by impromptu, leisure, and whimsy:

> *the rigged-up lights*
> *of the Palisades Amusement Park*
> *promise a west of pleasure, open space,*
> *and a circus of whippable lions,*

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while the cliffs beneath them, made
of latent vegetation, the live rock,
and a fall of snow, seems to me to be
the hanging gardens of Hammurabi.

The last verse comes close to what used to be called "pure poetry." Its function is to be an agreeable coda. Yet it is also too expected; and one of the few serious, as if structural, mannerisms in Mr. Dugan's poetry is that we tend to be given a noble yet nonchalant ending, some final but "cool" consolidation. This expectation of a final elegance is derived from the epigrammatic tradition, to which Mr. Dugan owes a great deal, and which is mediated, at least in part, by the contemporary revival in translation of the Latin lyric poets. He has also learnt from it to rely on figures of thought as well as of speech, and even to prefer these. The formalized wish, question, quote, and apostrophe; the contraposturing of two parts of a single sentence to give the effect of surprise or irony; the repetitions and enumerations; the ability to set up a strange hypothesis and to sustain it: these amply compensate for the relative absence of flashier tropes. This is not to say that starker condensations and more continuously climactic effects are not possible: the third section of "Elegy for Drinkers" strikes me as a genuine modern epigram:

A beggar with no legs below
the middle of his knees
walked down Third Avenue
on padded sockets, on
his telescoped or
anti-stilted legs
repeating, "Oh beautiful
faspacious skies!," upon
a one-man band. . . .
He
flew the American flag
for children on a stick
stuck in a veteran's hat,
and offered pencils. He
was made of drunks' red eyes.
He cried, "Courage! Exceed!"
He was collapsed in whole
display. Drunkards, for this
and with his pencil, I
put down his words drunk:
"Stand! Improvise!"

About the professional hazards of this poetry, the dangers of

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prosiness and the scattering of passion over a miscellaneous range of things, I do not have to speak. The quoted poem raises a more important issue. Mr. Dugan's best pieces are about the condition of the poet. Not always directly so: "A Gift's Accompaniment" describes the elaborate setting of a tiny jewel, but this setting, "the silver multiple / details, man-houred craftily / around that stone," are surely the poetic form itself elaborating a small-hearted substance. The question I have is not about the poet's tendency to talk shop, which might indeed indicate a small substance. I query rather the *way* in which he talks shop. That he considers himself primarily a craftsman may come as a relief after so many seer-poets, yet is he not undervaluing the role of poetry? And is his spiritual poverty as extreme as his moving verses on the beggar suggest? Every poet has his topos of modesty, but this volume features too great a proportion of apology to achievement. Especially since some of the finest poems are the apologies. Both "Admonitor: A Pearl for Arrogance" and "The Life and Death of the Cantata System" are, the one explicitly, the other obliquely, about the greater vision they evade. Mr. Dugan must undertake larger poems, must risk more. Otherwise his success will rest on the image he projects of a prankish talent. Eat crow, but nobly; walk gently with a big stick: the mode is graceful but also exhibitionistic.

Robert Graves, so gossipy about other religions, never profanes his own. Not one of his *New Poems* is uninteresting or unworthy of the craft. Though it is a slender volume, at least three or four poems in it will survive because they move in a time of their own. "The Cliff Edge," "The Miller's Man," and "The Winged Heart' are perfect in their reticence: a modicum of words, a hinted substance, and a religious simplification of knowledge. Their subject is, as it has ever been, the "mystery" of the relationship between man, woman and muse. But they are also, therefore, about every traditional theme: passion, purity, time, words, sympathetic magic. Elemental situations are expressed in elemental symbols:

> *Alone, together,*
> *Recalling little, prophesying less,*
> *We watch the serpent, crushed by your bare heel,*
> *Rainbow his scales in a deathward agony.*

But elemental and commonplace lie very close together. A perfect sense of pitch is often needed to distinguish them and to appreciate these poems. Graves is the most classical of the modern Romantics and his

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muse the daughter of memory as well as of inspiration. The individual talent is subordinated to tradition—but to tradition of a special kind. Grave's classicism goes back to the strict oral discipline of Celt or Greek: an esoteric craft, needing not only long apprenticeship but also the right cultic attitude toward inspiration. Almost every poem in this book is about the white goddess and addressed implicitly to her. She is not named, of course; nor does she appear separate from the women or sentiments she inspires; but she is, as it were, the open mystery on which this poetry is based.

It is Graves' strength to consider poetry a matter of troth rather than truth. He is committed solely to the art of the great poets and the muse they served. It is as simple as that—there is no further imperative, no direct concern with truth to self or to society. This is quite remarkable, since art today is either an impossible sincerity as in the confessional poems of Mr. Seidel, or a rhetorical calculation of some nicety as when Mr. Dugan is too conscious of his audience. Yet Graves does not succumb to an art for art's sake position. For his concept of art is quite analogous to the scientist's view of science or the novice's attitude toward religion. Granted that the *call* is there, these vocations demand a long and devoted apprenticeship. It is the paradox of all disciplines that one must master them before mastering experience through them. Self-expression, therefore, takes a very secondary place. By studying the "rich darkness" of his compeer poets, Graves achieves something greater than a personal cypher, technique or strategy. He achieves an absolute discretion, as in the following poem on innocence and experience:

Violence threatens you no longer:
It was your innocent temerity
Caused us to tremble: veterans discharged
From the dirty wars of life.
Forgive us this presumption: we are abashed—
As when a child, straying on the cliff's edge,
Turns about to ask her white-faced brothers:
"Do you take me for a child?"

The increased simplicity of these poems, each of which is an icon, gives rise to a single untoward reflection. Graves' relations with the muse are strangely easy. True, he is the first poet, after many Romantic anticipations, to talk so humanly about them; this human simpleness, in fact, makes his poems mysterious, since every encounter with woman or muse is quietly "beatristic." For the same reason, however, it is

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difficult to take some of his complaints or submissions as more than conventional. They recall many other delicious moans about the "cruel fair." That beauty has terror in it, that there are two women in every woman, and that the poet cannot possess that by which he is possessed, are universal and inexhaustible themes, but the same poet, even though endowed with a lucid and masterful English, cannot forever renew them. There is something consoling in these reiterations, something like a spell repeated, which charms the mind even as it wakes it. But the greatest art, as Iris Murdoch has observed, "invigorates without consoling, and defeats our attempts to use it as magic."

Geoffrey H. Hartman

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THE LESSING REPORT

A MAN AND TWO WOMEN. By Doris Lessing. Simon & Schuster. $5.00.

Published here last year, *The Golden Notebook* was the first of Doris Lessing's fifteen works to gain wide recognition in America, though as early as *Retreat to Innocence* Elizabeth Hardwick had seized on her as a novelist preferable to Muriel Spark (for one). We have yet to see Mrs. Lessing's two plays performed, but they read with the same earnest, talkative energy that charges her new book of short stories, the first since *The Habit of Loving*. That energy which is dedicated chiefly to its own increase, an utter confidence in the value of polemic (I argue, therefore I am), and a fanatic idea of sex as *the* decisive human function, determining, not determined by, all others—these preoccupations characterize an *oeuvre* which in a dozen years has assumed considerable proportions.

Yet it would not occur to Mrs. Lessing's readers, or at least to her admirers, to ask *her* the question put so often and often admiringly to Muriel Spark: "How do you write so many books so fast?" (The Spark reply has become canonical as self-exposure: "It's quite simple. I write very quickly and never revise.") For all their crippling faults, Mrs. Spark's novels are always to be found, or at least are striving to be found, in the crowded provinces of art. Doris Lessing takes her stand elsewhere, with Lawrence when he says: "there is another kind of poetry; the poetry of that which is at hand: the immediate present. In the immediate present there is no perfection, no consummation, nothing finished." Such an *ars poetica* inevitably entails a great deal of waste: sloppy, shrill and unpersuasive prose. Yet I bracket Mrs. Lessing with Lawrence, not because her achievement suggests his, whatever her aspirations: Lawrence's record of surfaces never jeopardized the consistency of his own vision. Though not possessed of either the talent of that record or the genius of that vision, Mrs. Lessing is with Lawrence because she is the one English novelist now writing who acknowledges Lawrence's challenge to selfhood, his erosion of the private ego. What best equips her to accept the challenge is her unabating exploitation of her position within England's most embattled minority group: she is a woman. No Jew or homosexual, no Negro or Communist (of course Mrs. Lessing writes a great deal about all four; sometimes I even think she *is* all four) has employed to such enthralling effect a minority status for narrative purposes.

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Here, for instance, was the situation at the end of her last work, *The Golden Notebook,* which took 567 pages to explore and determine it:

Women, dauntless, warm-hearted, sensitive, imaginative creatures, in their righteous avidity for personal fulfillment and a proper spiritual habitation, must confront the world of men (and you know what *men* are!). With the characteristic gallantry of The Sex, though, women try to make the best of that world, but after engaging themselves, with all the concomitant drudgery such engagement demands (the suggestion is that it is somehow unwomanly for a woman to enjoy such things for their own sake), in politics (Communism), art (writing novels) and psychoanalysis (psychoanalysis), women discover that the world of men is a cheat and a snare for themselves and even for men, though men, the big babies, delude themselves with the professional toys of business and art. What's left, of course, is love. But for women the expression of love, since they are without a religious vocation—at least Doris Lessing's women are—has to be a sexual one. Well, that's where the trouble starts. And the fun, at least for a while. Until it comes out (and Mrs. Lessing makes the matter clear enough) that men have a good time sexually with women in general, but women have a good time sexually (vaginal orgasm) only with men they love. And love is a lousy aphrodisiac for men. So the public life is a deception, the rewards of sexuality a disgrace. It is with this bitter knowledge that *The Golden Notebook* leaves us: after long conversation, all other activity being estranged or dismissed. . . .

In the new book of stories, this situation is articulated a little further. In the first piece, a "civilized" rape is executed by an egotistical failure of a journalist ("It was then, with the tears drying on his eyelids, which felt old and ironic, that he decided he would sleep with Barbara Coles") upon this lovely girl-genius who is presented entirely without ironic distance. For all its violence, the sexual intrusion is dispatched as efficiently as any White-Goddess-worshipper could hope, and the tone is set: subject as they are to men, women may sustain, can survive, and must somehow transcend them.

The title story offers the second articulation, which to the thesis Women Are Wonderful, Men Are Beasts, offers this antithesis: Women Have Something Even Worse Than A Beast In Themselves. A "happily" married woman whose husband is away on a long and apparently happy trip visits her "happily" married artist friends who have had a baby late in their marriage. The sexual tensions among the three are explored (I refer to the three adults), and Our Heroine, again preternaturally

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sensitive and comprehending, finding herself about to seduce her friend's husband, reflects: "What is going to happen now will blow Dorothy and Jack and that baby sky-high; it's the end of my marriage. I'm going to blow everything to bits. There was almost uncontrollable pleasure in it." And only her "vision of the helpless baby" saves the day. Thus a woman's energies can lead her to the verge of the destruction of others, but the real destruction, of course, the one that counts, is her own.

The final stage in this disintegration of woman's potential in a world of male success and male sexuality is supplied in the last story, "To Room Nineteen." Here the life of a "happily" married young woman with an attractive husband, children, brains, friends and fortune is unpeeled in the manner of one of Lawrence's married-love onions—"Two Blue-birds," for instance—until, with remarkable patience and skill in the transitions, the woman's whole existence is shown to be utterly a lie; the only reality she can encompass somehow connects with the time she puts in at a seedy hotel alone, somewhere near Paddington. Eventually, all else having failed—work, husband, lover, children—she turns on the gas, "quite content, lying there, listening to the faint soft hiss of the gas that poured into the room, into her lungs, into her brain as she drifted off into the dark river."

Here Mrs. Lessing takes us farther than she has yet cared or dared to go (though Anna's experiences in *The Golden Notebook* certainly afford a more explicit preliminary initiation) into woman's tragic ontogeny, the abdication of her liberties, her voluntary servitude, humiliation, torment and even death after everything else has been endured. The word "ontogeny" may sound odd—but I believe it is called for. What we have in any case is a complete spiritual evolution, an ascesis, whose previous stages we were invited to follow in the earlier sequence of Martha Quest novels, *Children of Violence*. In this descent into hell, the appropriate conclusion is the body's destruction.

That is Mrs. Lessing's subject, not her pretext, and here Pauline Réage holds out her hand to Doris Lessing, whose design is no less scandalous than that of *Histoire d'O*. As Susan Rawlings lets the gas pour into her room, I cannot help thinking of O, naked in her owl mask as she asks Sir Stephen for death. Both authors might have subtitled their works *A Woman's Progress*.

Of course the gaps in this *gradus ad infernam* can be filled with a number of pieces not directly on the descending spiral of what I take to be Mrs. Lessing's main route. There are a number of standard British studies in class hysteria, and echoes of a lot of her earlier work (how

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hard it is for a novelist to produce short stories that do not seem like abortions of novels—Lawrence, farewell!). She writes vividly about South Africa (one of her finest achievements is certainly the early Johannesburg novella, "Hunger," published in the Penguin collection *Five*); wittily about herself; and is on the way to establishing a new vocabulary, as Lawrence failed to do, for the Act of Kind ("she felt his smallness, writhed free of him, thinking, 'the only way to get this over is to make him big again' "). But surely these are irrelevant virtues in a writer whose courage suggests those seemingly nerveless chauffeurs who take you on death-defying (death-seeking?) drives in the mountains that slope down to Caracas: it's a bumpy ride, but who else knows those roads?

Richard Howard

PRETENSION AND PERFORMANCE

THE TESTAMENT OF MUSIC. By Ernest Newman. Alfred A. Knopf. $5.95.

The three recent collections of Ernest Newman's writings in magazines and newspapers—*From the World of Music, More Essays From the World of Music,* and now *Testament of Music*—have offered only a small amount of the journalism that won him his international reputation as a critic while he was winning his reputation as a scholar with the books that culminated in the four-volume *The Life of Richard Wagner.* The reputations represented the public's acceptance of the claims that Newman made for his work; and though the first important and damaging challenge to these claims was made almost thirty years ago, it was only when I read the three collections that I realized how large the discrepancy was between Newman's pretensions and his performances, and how much his writings were overestimated.

Faced with the awesomely documented text of the first volume of *The Life of Richard Wagner,* readers like myself accepted what they were in no position to question—Newman's claim to be replacing earlier *fable convenue,* as he called it, with fact established by examination of the documentary evidence; and a little later they accepted his further claim to have done the same thing in *The Man Liszt.* But Carl Engel, reviewing *The Man Liszt* in *The Musical Quarterly,* demonstrated that instead of allowing the documentary material to

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dictate his ideas Newman had allowed his ideas to pervert some of the documentary material—to misrepresent the contents of some of the Liszt-D'Agoult letters to make them support his contentions about the relations of the two people. After this demonstration—which Newman, as far as I know, didn't answer, and whose correctness I discovered when I looked up the volume of correspondence—one couldn't be confident about the rigor and scrupulousness of Newman's dealing with documentary material elsewhere, and specifically in *The Life of Richard Wagner*. And as it happened, the publication in 1951 of a volume of Hanslick's music criticism enabled me to discover how Newman had misrepresented the review of Wagner's concert in Vienna in 1872 and other writings of Hanslick. Moreover, though Newman didn't answer Engel's demonstration of his scholarly malpractice in *The Man Liszt* in 1935, he did deal in an extraordinary manner with certain highly vulnerable statements in Engel's review of the third volume of the Wagner biography in 1941—among them Engel's monstrous contention that because of the connection between Wagnerism and Nazism "we should ban and burn every scrap of Wagner's music and writings, and every book written about the amazing wizard, beginning with the books of the Anglo-Wagnerian Ernest Newman." What was extraordinary in Newman's dealing with this was that he answered it not in 1941 in a letter or article, but in 1946, long after Engel's death, in an appendix of the final volume of the Wagner biography; and he asked the world to believe that "if I have not made a practice of replying to Dr. Engel's ill-tempered comments . . . it is because I would as soon have thought of going round with an antiseptic cloth wiping up the slaver of a rabid dog. But I feel that I ought not to bring the present biography to a close without some exposure of the manners and the methods of this gentleman"; but it seemed clear that actually he had adopted the strategy of remaining silent when Engel had made a criticism that was valid and effective and replying when Engel had said something monstrously stupid, and of claiming then that such monstrous stupidity was what he had ignored before. These methods and manners didn't restore confidence in the rigor and scrupulousness of Newman's operation as a scholar; and what he had revealed here one began to recognize in the critical writing: much of it was the writing of a bullying tooth-and-nail debater who used incorrect facts in fallacious reasoning against misstatements of what he was arguing against.

This—about which I will say more in a moment—is only one of the things one discovers in reading the three collections. Another

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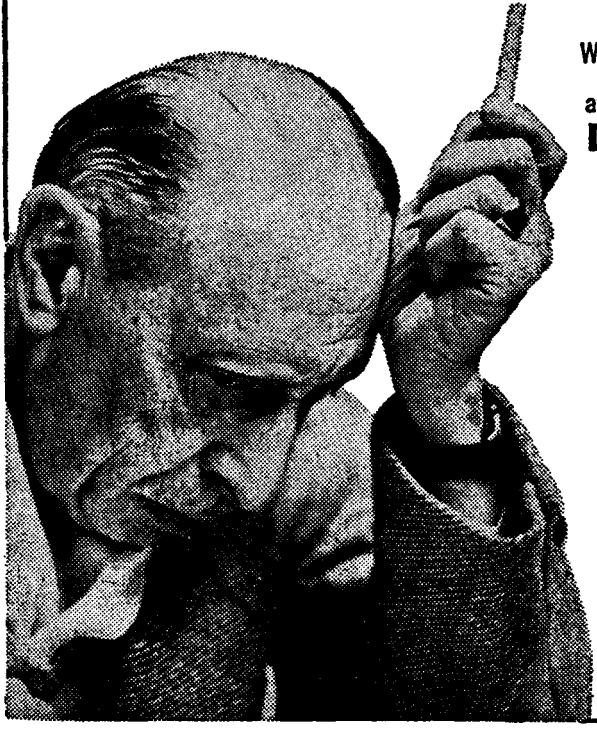
—Virginia Kirkus Bulletin

DIALOGUES AND A DIARY

IGOR STRAVINSKY and ROBERT CRAFT



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is how poor the writing is—how verbose, and as a result how inexact in statement and conducive to fallacy in reasoning; and how badly it performs the critic's primary and essential task of describing and evaluating the work of art that is presented to him. This too I will say more about presently; but an interesting preliminary at this point is Newman's comment on the music criticism of Bernard Shaw collected in *Music in London 1890-94.* As a young provincial who confined his reading of criticism to men like Sainte-Beuve, Taine, Brunetière and Lessing, Newman hadn't known of the mere musical journalism Shaw was doing in London; and reading it for the first time in 1932 he noted that Shaw "concerned himself with music only as it came his way week by week in . . . performances, and . . . went no further into any subject than his couple of columns . . . demanded of him," and that—using in this his knowledge of what he was writing about, his "lively intellect" and a literary style with "directness . . . point . . . wit and humor"—he produced articles "not only as readable but as valuable in 1932 as they were in 1890." What is interesting about this is that the operation which produced Shaw's writing—the concert-reviewing in a newspaper which he was content to do—Newman from the beginning of his own career disdained and denounced as a worthless activity and a waste of the critic's powers that should be devoted to "lengthy and connected essays in book form" and the other loftier activities Newman carried on in addition to the concert-reviewing he was compelled to do. And worthless too, in Newman's opinion, was what Shaw accepted as his critical task in his reviewing—the task, as E. M. Forster has described it, of considering the work of art "as an object in itself . . . and [telling] us what [he can] about its life," or, as Henry D. Aiken once put it, of attending to, and reporting, "what one directly hears and feels" in the work. This Newman described contemptuously as "performing a fantasia on [one's] own 'reactions' to a work," which, he contended, told a reader nothing about the work, but only things about the critic that were of no interest or value to anyone else. Not, again, that Newman, in his own concert-reviewing, didn't do what he was contemptuous of; but in addition he professed to do what he contended was the critic's *real* task, which is to inform the reader about the operation of the composer's mind. And it is ironic that whereas Shaw, content with his modest objective, produced wonderfully perceptive writing that is fascinating today, Newman, contemptuous of that objective and pursuing his more pretentious ones, failed not only in these but in the modest one he disdained, producing not only pretentious think-pieces that were erroneous

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in fact and reasoning but also descriptions and evaluations of pieces of music that reveal his lack of mere critical perception—of the ability, which Shaw had, to hear accurately what was to be heard in Mozart's G-minor and Verdi's earlier operas, among other things.

Reporting the operation of the composer's mind was one of a number of impressive-sounding things Newman thought of himself as doing that he didn't really do. What he was concerned with was that "the constitutional bias of [the composer's] mind makes him do practically the same thing again and again when he is confronted by much the same general idea to be expressed," so that "each composer's general procedure can be reduced, by analysis, to a few simple formulae." But it was Newman himself who once pointed out correctly that "the same formula lay ready to Bach's hand on a hundred occasions, but the inspiration that could vivify . . . the formula was not always at his command," and that this produced the difference between Bach's workmanlike verse and his poetry. Clearly, criticism is concerned with that difference—with what the composer achieves beyond his formulae. It is in the particularities of this in each work that we get the real, active, purposeful operation of the composer's mind, as against its mechanical operation in his general formulae; it is they that constitute the life which Forster says it is the critic's task to perceive and report; and this life produced by the real operation of the composer's mind. Newman, as we shall see, often was unable to perceive.

Another impressive-sounding activity Newman thought of himself as carrying on was listening to music of the past with a mind purged, as he wrote in 1929, "of the music . . . written since the epoch when the work was written," and "with ears contemporary with itself." Only with this discipline could one, faced with an opera like *Norma,* begin to hear what "gave it its superior value in the eyes of its contemporaries," and did one's ears, "brutalized by the more highly colored music of later times," recover "the sensitiveness of contemporary ears to the finer shades of such music as Bellini's" and hear "the really vital things in it," which he said were not the "saccharine and flaccid" melodies but the "hundred passing little subtleties in the score." But in dismissing the melodies as saccharine and flaccid Newman was not hearing with the ears of Bellini's contemporaries what gave his music its superior value for them; he was listening with ears of today—or rather with his particular ears, which were unable to hear the beauty of melodies like *"Tutto è sciolto"* and *"Ah, non credea"* in *La Sonnambula* and *"Qui la voce"* in *I Puritani* that many listeners of today are able to hear. And as for Bellini's contemporaries, they may have

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been aware of the little subtleties in the score; but what gave it its value for them were those melodies.

I might add that this is a subject Newman wrote about many times, and with much confusion and inaccuracy. We find him writing in 1944 that he has never heard the orchestral phrase preceding Donna Anna's words *"Calma il tuo tormento"* in the aria *"Non mi dir"* "given its proper expressiveness, for the reason that neither conductors nor players have realized what it meant to Mozart and his contemporaries" (I can't believe the little orchestral phrase meant anything to them beyond its meaning in the performances I have heard). But two paragraphs earlier he has said: "We have to recognize frankly that it is impossible for us to play or sing in public much of the older music as its contemporaries played or sang it, because the world can never hear it with the ears and the minds of those contemporaries. The 'Messiah' sung as it was in Handel's day would sound comic to us." And he has spelled this out in 1935, printing a measure from *The Messiah* as it appears in the score and is sung today and then this measure as it was sung in Handel's time, when "the soloists [indulged] in all kinds of shakes and appogiature and other coloratura embellishments," and commenting that "the feeling of the eighteenth century for the expressive power of coloratura has vanished from the earth, never to return. Are we to restore the externals of this old manner for pure antiquarianism's sake, and so drive people away from the Handel oratorios, or ignore them and let people have a Handel they can understand and admire?" Thus the man who on the one hand has argued that one must listen to old music with the ears of its contemporaries argues on the other hand that one should not listen to the actual sounds of the music that contemporary ears heard. And as against Newman's contentions the facts are that "I know that my redeemer liveth" as it appears in the printed score and is usually sung today is not the piece of music Handel had in mind, but is an incomplete notation of that piece which he expected the singer to complete by filling the wide intervals with scale passages and appogiaturas before long notes in the style of the period (as Joan Sutherland has done, without comic effect, in a recent recorded performance of *The Messiah*); that the excesses indulged in by exhibitionistic singers—which are what Newman is talking about—were a perversion of this normal operation that other singers performed with taste (as Sutherland did recently); and that the coloratura in Handel's, Mozart's, Bellini's and Verdi's music does have dramatic expressiveness for listeners today.

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I might add further that it is Newman's habitual practice in argument to deal with the perversion of what he is arguing about instead of the thing itself, and to deal with it not as a perversion of the thing but as its normal form. Thus he argues against the perversion of the critic's operation that he refers to contemptuously at various times as the critic's performing a fantasia on his own reactions to a work, his writing about himself a propos of a work, his reporting the reactions of his soul to masterpieces—against this not as a perversion of the operation but as though this perversion were the normal operation of the critic reporting the life he perceives in a work. And Newman's contention that this writing tells the reader nothing about the work, but only things about the critic that are of no interest to anyone else, is true only of the perversion he is attacking, not of the real critical operation, which does tell the reader things about the work. That operation may also tell him things about the critic; but these too are of interest when the critic is a Shaw, and of no interest only when he is a Newman.

Another big subject on which Newman writes repeatedly, and with pretension greater than achievement, is form. He is concerned

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with the distinction between the mere external appearance of it and the genuine thing—between form as a mere mold or pattern that is filled according to specifications, and form as a shape assumed by the accumulation of details which succeed each other in accordance with their mutual coherence. Discussing the instrumental composer's problem of achieving continuity and logic in a large structure, he contends that the easy way is the filling in of a mold or pattern like sonata form, the difficult way that of "the creative imagination at its best, its most logical," which is when it works "as Coleridge described Shakespeare's imagination working: 'he goes on creating,' says Coleridge, 'and evolving B out of A, and C out of B, and so on.'" The two ways, and the two kinds of form they produce, are exemplified by, on the one hand, the first movement of a Mozart symphony, and, on the other hand, the single movement of Sibelius' Symphony No. 7. The Mozart, "however marvelous . . . as a specimen of its own historical genre, is none the less the representative of a relatively primitive genre"—"the musical equivalent of that simple type of pictorial design" in which there is "a central figure with a balancing figure on either side of it"; and "it illustrates merely a stage through which the symphony has to pass in order to attain to [the] higher stage of organization . . . seen in a work such as the Sibelius No. 7"—higher, in that unity and balance are achieved by other devices than the "simple and obvious mathematical symmetries" of the Mozart. And the beginnings of the second way are seen in the last piano sonatas and string quartets of Beethoven, in which "'sonata form' and all the rest of it have . . . gone by the board," and "Beethoven now constructs in a new way because he is thinking in a new way . . . everything that happens in the music of a movement is a proliferation of a single cell." But the instrumental composers after Beethoven—because "their brains were not of the calibre of Beethoven's"—were unable to continue what he began, and took off instead from the structure of his earlier works—the result in Brahms's Symphony No. 2 being what Newman refers to as "the merest class room mechanics in the 'symphonic' manipulation" of the first movement. "But with the final liquidation of sonata form . . . the concentric way of thinking and building has become more and more attractive to the greater composers," of whom Sibelius, for Newman, is one.

All this has an appearance of truth in Newman's words, but is untrue of the realities the words are concerned with. As against Newman's opposed schematic and organic forms, the reality is in music what it is in poetry: sonata form is for the composer what the sonnet or rondeau is for the poet—a framework within which he deploys the

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organically coherent substance of the work. As against Newman's three sections of the primitive Mozart first movement, the reality is the Mozart first movement as it is actually experienced in a symphony—experienced not instantaneously in its schematic entirety, but as a progression presenting itself, detail after detail, in time, and producing on the mind the continuous, elaborated, and cumulative effect of its successive details, with in addition the effect of departure, in the development, from what has been presented in the exposition, the effect of seeming return, at the beginning of the recapitulation, to what was presented in the exposition, and the effect of the unexpected changes, in the recapitulation, in what is repeated from the exposition. And when the first movement is that of a Mozart piano concerto the reality is that of a more elaborately organized progression, with the additional effect of the differences in what first the orchestra and then the solo piano state in the exposition, and the changes in this distribution of material between them, and in order and context of ideas, in the recapitulation. As against Newman's idea of Beethoven's discarding of sonata form in his last sonatas and quartets, there is the reality that this first-movement framework was the one Beethoven used from the beginning of his creative activity to its end, and for all the varieties of his musical thinking including the last: the explosively vehement thought of the first movement of the last piano sonata, Op. 111, (after the slow introduction) and the quiet thought of the first movement of the last quartet, Op. 135, both follow the clearly marked sonata-form course of exposition, development, recapitulation and coda—the clear markings being the prescribed 'second group' in the prescribed related key in the exposition and in the prescribed tonic key in the recapitulation, and, in the sonata, the prescribed first and second endings of the exposition—the first leading back to the beginning of the exposition for its customary repetition, the second leading on to the development. As against Newman's idea of what happened after Beethoven, there is the reality that the first-movement framework he used to the last was one that Schubert used for the further varieties of *his* thinking: whereas Brahms, striving to write greater than he felt, could indeed only, in the first movement of the Symphony No. 1, fill out the framework with aridly synthetic substance contrived mechanically by formula [e.g. the sawing away in cross-rhythms], Schubert deployed in the first movement of his Symphony No. 9 the substance that issued from genuine poetic impulse—substance that occasioned unprecedented episodes in which Tovey sees Schubert, "like other great classics, . . . pressing his way toward new forms." There is also the reality of

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Mahler's use of the first-movement framework, in our own century, for *his* musical thinking. And a final reality to point out is that the kind of continuity and form Newman argues for he is unable to recognize when it is presented to him in the three movements of Debussy's *La Mer,* in each of which the evocative fragments are fitted together in a progression with coherence and superb cumulative effect: all Newman can hear in this and the other major instrumental works (he excepts *Jeux*) is evidence that "the constructive sense of Debussy . . . so far as the larger forms are concerned, was no more than that of a child."

This is one of the examples of Newman's failure in the critic's primary task of perceiving and reporting what is to be heard in a piece of music. Another is the characterization of Bellini as a "saccharine and flaccid melodist" that I mentioned earlier. And we find him, in 1911, exclaiming: "Heaven knows how empty some of these instrumental works of Mozart can be!"—this about one of the piano concertos and the G-minor Symphony, which he says made him feel sometimes that he was hearing "the nursery prattle of a bright child," as against the Strauss *Burleske, Also sprach Zarathustra* and *Dance of the Seven Veils* on the same program, which filled him "with a kind

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of awe before the enormous possibilities of psychological expression that music has developed." True, in 1923 he speaks of the inability of youth to appreciate the self-sufficient beauty of Mozart, and writes that "my delight in Mozart has gone on increasing since I first came completely under his spell some fifteen or twenty years ago." But those statements in 1911 were made not by a youth but by a man of forty-three. And in 1924 he asks, "Is Mozart never dull and feebly repetitious, especially in his symphonic slow movements?," citing his "dilly-dallying in the slow movement of the G-minor Symphony."

Again, we find Newman, in 1913, describing *Il Trovatore* and the other operas of Verdi's middle period as "just the awkward but fascinating sprawlings of a cub," with nothing of the real Verdi that he says is to be heard only in the Requiem, *Otello* and *Falstaff*. This reveals his inability to perceive the superb results of the operation of the impressive powers of the real Verdi of those earlier works—e.g. the melodic power that produces *"Tacea la notte"* and the other superb melodic structures. And as late as 1933 we find him exhibiting this lack of perception even about a work as late as *Don Carlo*, which is for him a major example of "how little [Verdi] really changed from first to last; time after time, in his latest works, we discover that a really fine piece of expression is actually nothing more than an old formula with a better face on it"; and "unfortunately the reverse is also true; as likely as not, a later work will show us not an improved but a degraded version of the formula." Particular illustration of this—which for him includes the ensembles in the *auto-da-fé* scene and Philip's study that actually are excellent and effective specimens of the genre—is apparently all he hears in *Don Carlo,* which he says "is often interesting because it reads like a sketch for something Verdi was to do better in 'Aida' or 'Otello.'" And by his silence about them he reveals his failure to perceive the marvelous achievements of Verdi's matured powers in the great pages of the work: not only the entire scene with Philip's famous soliloquy, his interview with the Grand Inquisitor, the quartet, Eboli's confession to Elisabetta, and her *"O don fatale,"* not only Elisabetta's *"Tu che le vanità"* in the last act, with its melodic grandeur that is unique in Verdi's writing, but the tremendous orchestral prelude to this act, and the second-act colloquies of Carlo and Elisabetta and of Philip and Rodrigo, which have the flexible and free-ranging vocal phraseology, the imaginatively resourceful supporting orchestral invention that one hears in *Otello,* and are some of Verdi's most accomplished, incandescent and affecting writing. What Newman is further unaware of is the truth and the

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applicability to *Don Carlo* of Tovey's observation that "the highest qualities attained in important parts of a great work are as indestructible by weaknesses elsewhere as if the weaknesses were the accidents of physical ruin," and that "neither Shakespeare nor Schubert will ever be understood by any critic or artist who regards their weaknesses and inequalities as proof that they are artists of less than the highest rank."

There are additional failures—with Moussorgsky, with Stravinsky—but no magazine could provide the space to deal with all the errors of perception, fact and reasoning in these collections of Newman's critical writings.

B. H. Haggin

MORE EXILES

BLUES PEOPLE: Negro Music in White America. By LeRoi Jones. William Morrow. $5.00.
TIME OF ARRIVAL AND OTHER ESSAYS. By Dan Jacobson. Macmillan. $3.95.

The exile is no stranger to history, and certainly not to our time. The story of the Jews is so familiar that it is difficult for anyone to try to tell it again. The exile of the Negro in America is just beginning to be known by the society which once allowed him little travel and no entrance to its social or cultural life. Whether the exile is enforced or claimed, its very definition is its detachment, and from this condition arises both the yearning and the anger.

Blues People is a book of large ambitions. LeRoi Jones, poet, essayist, story writer and jazz critic, will not confine himself to the history of the development of the blues as music. He will not simply talk about blues people, how they felt in their double exile—as Negroes and as artists—from a country they never left. He subtitles his book "Negro Music in White America" and from the first page we are informed of his larger sociological and anthropological interests and of his intention to show us the roots of blues in a people and their fate.

Yet the book is at its best when Jones is less concerned with these large questions, and traces the history of early blues and their relationship to early jazz, purely instrumental blues, then the more

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classic blues, sung as formal entertainment rather than as an expression of a person's private life or a people's social tragedy, and finally the emergence of boogie-woogie, ragtime, and dixieland. We are next led through what the author calls "the modern scene." We see big-band jazz marching to its death in the "watered-down slick 'white' commercializations" of swing. We hear about the *separation* (the author italicizes words like this) of the Negro musician from both white and Negro middle-class culture. Beboppers restore jazz, but their *anti-assimilationist* sounds antagonize white America; and the middle-class Negro emulates his white "bossman" again, "trapped in the sinister vapidity of mainline American culture." Finally, in the origin and development of progressive and cool jazz, the white man comes into his own—and jazz, of all things, is split into two mutually segregated forms. Thus, the progressive jazz of Stan Kenton comes from a white, upper-middle-class cerebral tradition, and cool jazz is most suitable for "white musicians who favored a 'purity of sound' . . . rather than the rawer materials of dramatic expression." But the bebop of Charlie Parker "re-established blues as the most important Afro-American form in Negro music."

Mr. Jones falters when he leaves this study of Negro music and its various forms for extensive forays into history, sociology, psychology, and ethical judgment of class values. For instance, he tells us that narcotics users, and particularly heroin addicts, are really a rather self-assured and aristocratic group. His incredible words are: "Heroin is the most popular addictive drug used by Negroes because . . . the drug itself transforms the Negro's normal separation from the mainstream of the society into an advantage (which I have been saying I think it is anyway). It is one-upmanship of the highest order." Such talk is nonsense of the highest order. The medical and psychiatric agonies, the sickness and desperation of the addict, whether he is high, low, or withdrawing, do not deserve such ill-informed sentimentality.

It is ironic that this gifted young poet, bent on fighting middle-class American culture in all its shabby superficiality, yields so willingly to that very culture's most vulgar jargon, its narrowest, pseudo-sociological mode of thinking. A writer who has written fine poetry to honor Charlie Parker tells us in this book that "the verticality of the city began to create two separate secularities, and the blues had to be divided among them if it was going to survive at all." Scattered through the book are phrases like "pseudo-autonomous existence" or sentences like "The lateral exchange of cultural reference between black and white produced an intercultural fluency."

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If Mr. Jones plans to persist with such talk, and he really wants to pursue his lay sociology and psychology, he should be more careful about the tone of some of his descriptions. I am not recommending that he follow the model of those heartless social scientists whose work so often panders to those who want abstractions about people rather than the truth of their actual lives. But the sociologists, the psychologists and anthropologists whom he so much admires have a serious job to do, gathering information about people and their societies and trying to make sense out of it. Their concern must be strong, their values real, their work passionate, but none of these to the detriment of their curiosity and good sense as observers. They may not like what they see, but surely they cannot confuse their hopes with their study. At times one finds in this book less concern with information than polemical writing disguised in the latest jargon of the social sciences. And often this jargon is not even used to communicate or describe, but to condemn.

The book is most effective in its simple, direct information about blues music and its people, and its willingness to relate the suffering of generations of Negroes to the tenaciously redemptive power of their music. What was one kind of Hell, the author says, now turns into another as Negroes succumb to the blandishments of the white middle-class world. The blues and their successors in the several forms of jazz are thereby threatened. No less so, however, than the writer—living in that same world—who tries to do them justice.

Dan Jacobson clearly felt himself enough threatened by *his* world to leave it. The longest essay in this fine collection tells of his arrival in London. His childhood as a South African Jew weighed heavily upon him. His youth and its choice of loyalty to this past or departure from it was very much his challenge. The possibilities of his manhood as a writer, as a person with friends, family, and a place to live cropped into his mind at almost every turn in the great city of London, a city movingly appreciated by the young emigré. He comes to it like a cook, an artist, a musician—savoring it, noticing its bulk and its more subtle shapes and forms, responding to its light and shadows, hearing its various sounds.

Jacobson obviously enjoys travel. The book has four parts, three of which are given the names of countries: England, South Africa, and Israel. These three nations in their customs and traditions are closely involved in the writer's life and identity. He writes about each with a special intimacy, and where there is desolation or agony

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to describe it is done clearly and with compassion. We are taken to the Jewish ghetto in London, dying yet twitching still with life and with memories for the susceptible visitor. In four essays we are exposed to South Africa's uniquely tragic and disastrous racial situation, and in two more we hear about Israel from one of *its* exiles. The author is at his very best in dealing with ironic situations, as in the resemblance of a crowd lunging after visiting royalty to a racist mob; the reactions of whites as they watch a native African festival; the strange twist of history which makes Israel no solution for the problems of the Diaspora, making in certain ways Jewish identity—in the continuing "abroad" that is the world outside Israel—more emphatic, even less defined, still puzzling. All through these three parts the essays are both simple and tightly organized, the decency and charity of the writer always present, and his essential good sense, his lucidity of mind a pleasure to encounter.

Of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Jacobson says: "I am not sure whether we can learn more from the book's faults than from its merits; but I am sure at least that we can learn something from our own misguided insistance, over these many years, that the book has no merit at all." He goes on to wonder whether "our revulsion from Tom doesn't spring in part from an uneasy fear that his way of asserting his humanity might be as effective as any other way open to him—or to us." He goes on to make his critical judgment: "Stowe never fully imagined that the day would come when Negroes would read her novel and comment upon it . . . [and] this failure of imagination is a crucial one; and one for which she is less and less likely to be forgiven in the future." Yet, he concludes wryly with these words: "We can trust her sufficiently to say that she would not have minded this at all."

These are the words of one who understands the relationship between the individual and the historical moment. We act out of our lives and make history; but we act *in* history, too. To denounce from the perfections of a later period the "failure" of a book which was itself striving toward that period, to see its malicious "influence" retrospectively rather than its contextual meaning, its still partial relevance, and certainly its integrity is to abandon, Jacobson feels, one's vision and one's humanity.

Jacobson's feeling for the humane comes through again in his treatment of Mark Twain and Huckleberry Finn. The dismaying misapplication of psychiatric theory and nomenclature to literature has hardly left the relationship of Huck and Jim untouched. Who can

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ignore the provocations of a jazzy, doctrinaire criticism, plucked from psychoanalysis, and thrown foolishly, accusingly, sometimes with unbridled sanctimony at the lives of writers or the characters of their books? Here is Mr. Jacobson on Huck and Jim:

> By any definition of the word, the relationship between Huck and Jim on the river is considerably more "civilized" than any relationship which they can enjoy with anyone else or with each other, on the shore. The relationship between the two on the raft demands from them both the sacrifices which civilization demands from us all, and which we frequently find most burdensome to make: it demands mutual responsibility, self-abnegation, and moral choice. . . . The tragedy of the book is that the fineness of Huck's relationship with Jim is impermanent; it cannot survive on shore, as the last chapters dismally demonstrate. Though he did not realize it, this is the saddest and fullest judgment that Twain was ever to make of "the damned human race."

The essays are very much like Orwell's in their clarity and warmth. And their author's mind is both sensitive and sensible, an unusual combination these days.

Robert Coles

PROUST: REMEMBRANCE AND RECOGNITION

PROUST'S BINOCULARS. By Roger Shattuck. Random House. $3.95.

Amid the spate of biographical literature on Proust, it is not very often that one comes across a book that raises the really fundamental critical issues about his incomparable masterpiece, *A la recherche du temps perdu*. Roger Shattuck, however, has written such a book (it is actually a long essay) in his *Proust's Binoculars*. This little work goes right to the heart of the major questions involved in any interpretation of the structure and meaning of the novel. It is a book that everyone interested in Proust will have to read; but it is also a book that must be read with a great deal of caution. Mr. Shattuck's admiration for

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Proust is so winning and ingratiating, the illuminations he provides so numerous, his prose so lucid and felicitious, that one finds it hard to resist accepting his point of view uncritically as definitive. To do so, however, would be a serious mistake. For Mr. Shattuck's interpretation is really a concealed polemic that leads him unduly to exaggerate (and even to misinterpret) certain key aspects of the Proustian universe.

Mr. Shattuck's most solid contribution to Proust criticism is made in the earlier sections of his book. Here he focuses on the predominance of optical imagery among the luxuriance of metaphor that is one of the greatest delights of the Proustian style. This preference for optics is more than a casual idiosyncracy or the result of Proust's fascination with the then-new discoveries of photography and the cinema. Rather, it is through the imagery of optics that Proust will ultimately succeed in expressing the personal conquest of time that is the final goal and purpose of all his literary endeavors. Such optical imagery, as Mr. Shattuck notes, becomes increasingly important in the final volume, *Le temps retrouvé,* when the narrator of the book, after a long period of seclusion, returns to a world he has almost forgotten. And the revelation that overwhelms him at this time is his discovery of what Mr. Shattuck acutely calls "the optics of Time."

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What is the meaning of this phrase? In this final scene, we see the narrator struggling to recognize old friends who have been changed by the passage of time to the point of being unrecognizable. Suddenly he remembers them as they had been in, so to speak, their previous incarnation—or in a number of such past embodiments. All these images then fuse together into a unity in his consciousness, and by the difference between these various images the narrator feels that he can really *see* the passage of time. Even more, this "vision" of time appears to give him the sensation of a victory over its inexorable flux, a glimpse of immortality. "Proust set about to make us *see time*" writes Mr. Shattuck. But "to see anything in temporal depth, we need at least two impressions of it. . . . Memory in Proust's sense designates a stereoscopic or 'stereologic' consciousness which sees the world simultaneously (and thus out of time) in relief. Merely to remember something is meaningless unless the remembered image is combined with a moment in the present affording a view of the same object or objects."

This analysis of Proust's optical imagery, set against the background of the scientific and philosophical developments of his period, has never been done before and was emphatically well worth doing. And Mr. Shattuck adds to its value by distinguishing between three kinds of Proustian vision that alternate throughout the book. One he calls "cinematographic," a sequence of events that gives us the movement of uninterrupted time. A second is "montage," the sense of events in time as discontinuous, contrasted, contradictory. Finally, there is "stereoscopic" vision (is the image of Proust's "binoculars" really accurate?) which gives us unity in dissimilarity and time as arrested and transcended. These various visions, as Mr. Shattuck skillfully demonstrates, correspond to various experiential strata of Proust's novel.

Up to this point one can only follow Mr. Shattuck with admiration; but doubts begin to appear when he goes on to work out a new interpretation of the book in the light of this analysis of the "optics of Time." Most critics, Mr. Shattuck maintains, have generally neglected Proust's optical imagery and its crucial significance for the meaning of the novel. Instead, they have mistakenly tended to derive this significance from the famous series of revelatory moments, the *moments bienheureux* or *privilégiés*, which stud the pages of the book from first to last. During these moments the narrator is suddenly invaded by a flood of involuntary memory; this either restores the sensations of a past event in all its miraculous freshness, or enables the narrator to feel the *real* sensations corresponding to some past event for the first time. Despite the amount of attention that Proust himself lavishes on these experiences, Mr.

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Shattuck believes they are of secondary significance for any adequate understanding of the book. "In this exact sense" he affirms, using italics to reinforce his point, "most of Proust's commentators have gone astray. *The ultimate moment of the book is not a* moment bienheureux *but a recognition.*" The common failure to recognize this point, Mr. Shattuck tells us, forces him "to give a sharp wrench to the generally accepted interpretation of Proust's esthetics."

Now it is simply not true that all other critics have based their analysis of Proust exclusively on the *moments bienheureux* and have unduly neglected the recognition-scene.[1] What is true, however, is that no other critic has made the recognition-scene the crucial center around which the entire meaning of the novel revolves. Most have brought these two aspects of the book together in some sort of positive relation. But one of Mr. Shattuck's main aims is to drive a wedge between the *moments bienheureux* and this final scene. To be sure, he acknowledges the importance of the former as presentiments; but he insists on denying them a moral significance that harmonizes with and culminates in the act of recognition at the climax. Instead, he sees these *moments* as in effect *obstacles* to the attainment of self-knowledge. "The attitude of passivity on which they rely and the tendency they have to encourage the substitution of pleasure for effort, and objects for people, prevent them from offering the key to Marcel's salvation."

Mr. Shattuck attempts to support his devaluation of the *moments bienheureux* by an esthetic argument that is worth dwelling on for a moment. If the center of the book were contained in these latter, he contends, then "the structure of Proust's novel would be open to severe criticism. The role of the *moments bienheureux* in the action ceases two hundred pages before the end, and had the novel stopped there, a perfect circle could be drawn through this final scene and the early experience of the *madeleine.*" Presumably, then, the criticism would be that Proust had tacked on two hundred extra pages that add nothing to the book's ultimate significance. But if we accept Mr. Shattuck's view, would Proust's artistry be any better vindicated?

Why should he have introduced those elaborate descriptions of the *moments bienheureux,* which each time fill the narrator with a sense of unutterable joy and peace, if the significance of these events is really negated by the final consummation—if they represent only, as Mr. Shattuck will have it, "a vicious circle of fascination with a fleeting

1. In this connection, Mr. Shattuck might have another look at my own article on "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," which he taxes with exactly this oversight.

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passive pleasure in fortuitous recollection." All one could then say is that Proust has been deceiving his reader for the other twenty-eight hundred pages, and that the ecstacy and transcendence felt in the *moments bienheureux* is merely self-deception. If the recognition-scene is neglected, then the last two hundred pages are superfluous; if the *moments bienheureux* have no positive importance, then the value attributed to them in the text is inexplicable. This should be enough to show that any attempt to make too sharp a distinction between these complementary aspects of the book, whether in favor of one or the other, is critically indefensible.

One may well wonder why Mr. Shattuck is so determined to assign the *moments* to a position of subordination and inferiority. The answer can be found in the epithets he uses about them in the passage quoted above ("fleeting passive pleasure in fortuitous recollection"). For the *moments* represent the workings of an involuntary memory completely independent of the will of the individual; and critics have used this fact to draw some invidious conclusions about the novel.

Proust depicts each such experience as restoring a past personality that exists in the narrator at a deeper level than conscious life—a personality which, through the passage of the years, has remained unaffected by the more superficial level of personality that lives and acts in the world. Ramon Fernandez, in a penetrating article on the famous "intermittences of the heart" episode in Proust, pointed out forty years ago that such a conception of personality implied the existence in each individual of a set of isolated egos that did not interpenetrate with or react on each other. But such an interpenetration obviously is the precondition for all development of character, all capacity to learn from experience and to apply one's knowledge to life. Fernandez, who was a personal friend of Proust and a great admirer of his work, nonetheless felt impelled to point out that Proust's universe was deficient as a *total* image of human life because it lacked such a principle of spiritual progress. Mr. Shattuck does not directly controvert Fernandez's thesis in his text, but in his notes he expresses disagreement with a more recent statement of it by Robert Champigny. There can be little doubt that his own approach to Proust is motivated by a chivalrous desire to wipe this blot from the Proustian escutcheon.

Hence Mr. Shattuck tries to place the whole weight of the book on the final recognition-scene, which he desperately endeavors to read as containing exactly the principle of moral self-determination that Fernandez found missing. "The triumph of Marcel's career and Proust's novel lies in the fact that . . . a larger, more responsible, more mature

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act asserts itself in the form of recognition. When completely realized as self-recognition, it leads Marcel not into reverie but into the work of art. The effort required, the direction voluntarily chosen, the renunciation of lesser pleasures and illusions to serve a larger end—all these aspects of self-recognition give it a moral significance which the *moments bienheureux* never achieve." What Mr. Shattuck is doing here is very clear and rather touching; but if all other critics have failed to see this point, the reason may be that it is not really found in Proust.

In truth, the narrator's accidental visit to the reception at the Guermantes' is just as passive and fortuitous as the sensations that cause the *moments*. This visit releases exactly the same kind of psychic mechanism, which then brings the narrator's past flooding back in all its pristine freshness and vivacity. And all the *moments* also exhibit a similar (though unsuccessful) effort on the part of the narrator to grasp their meaning. Finally, what does the climax of the book really mean? Only that the narrator will now devote the remainder of his life to enshrining and immortalizing the *moments* themselves in a work of art! By recreating his past the narrator consecrates the inevitable; he does not discover any principle of personal self-integration that can work directly back on life itself.

What *is* different is the narrator's final self-recognition that his own life has been woven out of the countless strands through which it has touched the lives of other people, and his grasp of the "optics of Time" through which this interconnection can be portrayed. This act of self-recognition thus involves a shift from the personal to the social, and hence takes on a *new* dimension that may be called more specifically moral or ethical. But the overtones of self-mastery that Mr. Shattuck attributes to this final scene are strained and unconvincing. He appears to forget that the narrator's decision is not only a climax but also a beginning; the book the narrator decides to write is the one we have just been reading. And nothing in the pages we have traversed bears out Mr. Shattuck's incongruous allusion to "the rugged strength of [the narrator's] attitude toward life." The inappropriateness of such a phrase, in so sensitive a writer as Mr. Shattuck, reveals to what extent he has allowed a theory to overpower his responsiveness to the quality of a character.

Mr. Shattuck comes much closer to the truth when, in the final pages of his book, he places Proust's work in "the Oriental tradition of works of meditation and initiation into the mysteries of life." The essential meaning of the work he defines as follows: "A multiplicity of images, laws and fleeting illuminations lie along the course of our

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existence, but only a sustained and disciplined [?] pursuit of ourselves inwardly, only life truly lived leads to wisdom." This remark accurately conveys the sense of increasing disenchantment with the world that pervades the book, and the process of inner withdrawal and spiritual purification exemplified by the narrator's life. Whether such values should be ruled out of the Western tradition entirely is of course disputable. E. R. Curtius seems to me much closer to the actual sources of Proust's culture in calling him a Platonist. But in any case, there *is* a sense in Proust of being hopelessly entrapped on the wheel of life that may be described as "Oriental." Such an emphasis, however, implicitly concedes the point that Fernandez was trying to make.

No doubt these oscillations in Mr. Shattuck's interpretation stem partly from the very richness and complexity of Proust himself, whose work is an inexhaustible and many-faceted prism that appears differently from each new angle of illumination. More essentially, though, Mr. Shattuck's difficulties arise from his determination to read into or out of Proust everything that he most values himself. On the one hand, he speaks of Proust's novel assuming "the proportions of a gospel" because it rejects "the bravura activism and possessiveness of the West." On the other, he tries to convince us that the narrator's renunciation of the world amounts to an active domination of life's complexities. Unfortunately one cannot have the best of both East and West in one writer, even in so great a writer as Proust. Mr. Shattuck cannot consistently both exalt him for rejecting the standards of the Western tradition of moral activism, and then argue that his character achieves a self-integration that fulfills these very standards. It is permissible to maintain that these standards are inapplicable to Proust, or that they are in any case spiritually inferior to the ones expressed by his work; but not that he both accepts and negates them at the same time.

For all these reasons, the "wrench" that Mr. Shattuck gives to Proustian esthetics seems to me to throw it entirely out of kilter rather than to provide a more proper adjustment of its parts. But this does not mean, of course, that his book has no value. On the contrary, Mr. Shattuck is an excellent example of a critic whose intense one-sidedness has led to some extremely fecund results. More specifically, his exclusive focus on the recognition-scene has led to his definitive treatment of the "optics of Time"; this important subject will scarcely have to be explored again. In addition, the book contains many other excellent observations of great interest. One such is his remark on the importance of "forgetfulness" as a necessary condition for the workings of the "optics of Time." This shrewd insight serves as an esthetic justification for the sheer

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bulk of Proust's mammoth novel, since the reader, like the narrator, is literally supposed to forget whole sections he has read in order to experience the juxtaposition of past and present. Some of Mr. Shattuck's best pages also analyze the entire action of the book, and the final reconcilation of all the dualisms it contains, in terms of Proust's theory of metaphor. The quality of such perceptions adds to the importance of Mr. Shattuck's book, and his very ably argued thesis is certain to provoke a good deal of fruitful reflection and controversy.

Joseph Frank

THREE SATIRES

THE WAR OF CAMP OMONGO. By Burt Blechman. Random House. $3.95.
CONFUSIONS. By Jack Ludwig. New York Graphic Society. $4.95.
NIGHT AND SILENCE WHO IS HERE: AN AMERICAN COMEDY. By Pamela Hansford Johnson. Scribner's. $4.50.

The War of Camp Omongo is a vituperative, over-simplified satire of certain contemporary values embodied in middle- and upper-middle class Jewish culture. The setting is a summer camp for rich Jewish boys, but the novel is pure parable and Camp Omongo, in its celebration of conformity, savagery, and wealth, is presented as an explicit symbol of America. The hero of the parable is thirteen-year-old Randy Levine, whose father is a needle-stitcher in the clothing industry. The only boy in camp on scholarship, awkward at sports, and comparatively soft-hearted, Randy endures the taunts of the other campers. For a time he resists the system itself, offering gestures of sympathy toward fellow victims. But when he discovers that his father had turned union spy in order to get him the scholarship, Randy turns into a bigger tough than anyone else around (and there are some notable contenders). In his anguish, he pitches into the camp-wide competition ("war") with a vengeance, cheating at the games, half-drowning his best friend, breaking (altogether) a tent-mate's arm, and finally setting the whole camp on fire so that he can come out first in a treasure hunt.

The book indeed is so full of violence that even if we don't quibble with the rather obvious and wooden transformation the hero undergoes,

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it all very soon loses its point. Effects of contrast and vividness that might have been achieved are flattened out by the punch-drunk atmosphere. The campers wade through the book slashing, biting, gouging, kicking, screaming for blood. And this brutality is performed against a backdrop of imagery equally brutal: figures of decay, refuse, vomit, corpses, stenches, bowel-movements, plucked-up nails, pried-out teeth, and hacked-off genitals form the dream language of the novel.

The author's intent is, without flinching, to give us the full benefit of his savage indignation, to turn his gaze mercilessly on one aspect after another of our society: religion, politics, art, sports, class-structure, family life, business. He wishes to show that selfishness, corruption, violence, and Philistinism have corroded every layer of our communal life, until that life resembles nothing so much as the spawn of sewers, a microscopic swarm thriving in muck and slime, decaying, dying, eating and being eaten.

Enough of this vision is true to make one wish that it had been realized with genuine literary power. But it hasn't been. First of all, the noise is so loud, so unremitting, and so full of indiscriminate and barely controlled invective that it destroys its own significance. More of this sewage-tempest than he seems to realize has its source in Mr. Blechman's own soul rather than in the culture, and when distinctions like that get blurred, ironic communication breaks down immediately. Secondly, Blechman uses only stock characters—"types"—presumably because these make finer instruments of ridicule than more complex characters would. All satire to some extent does involve exposure of the known, the familiar, the typical forms of human folly. But the actors in this novel are so grossly simplified, pigeon-holed, and two-dimensional that type dwindles into stereotype, and exposure into cliché. Finally, every aspect of the society that the author examines is morally equated with every other aspect, all of them being cases in point illustrating the same thesis (and in pretty much the same way): the country is rotten, equally rotten in all of its manifestations. Blechman is in this sense Whitman's negative counterpart, but the trouble with the approach is the same whether all things are seen as equally good or equally bad: qualitative distinctions between phenomena vanish and neither discrimination, preference, nor any meaningful evaluation of anything remains possible.

The difficulty with *The War of Camp Omongo* is that its author is an amateur of his own nature: secure in his lily-white image of himself, he rages at the black universe around him, not seeing what festers from the lily itself. As a result there is no real play of tensions between self and society, or between various parts of self; no ambiguity because

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everything "Out There" is bad; no dialectic because there is only one side to the argument: no dramatic interest, no vision.

Jack Ludwig's *Confusions* is a warm, peppery comic novel about academic life, Jews, and the contemporary scene. "I sing confusion," the novel begins, "I, Joseph Gillis, myself confused, or, to put it another way, an American." Gillis, né Galsky, from Roxbury, Mass., changed his name on entering college "to prevent the sacrilege of 'Galsky' appearing on a Harvard degree *in Latin.*" The novel traces the external adventures of its hero from his boyhood romps with full-breasted and only-too-willing "boat-fresh Scottish housemaids," into his Harvard days where he meets and marries a stunning, green-eyed Radcliffe lute-player (a *shikseh,* full of moral earnestness) through his appointment at a second-rate and poisonous California college. But the real adventure of the book is the internal one: Galsky-Gillis's effort to unify the topsy-turvy circus of his own nature, to reconcile the paradoxes and contradictions inside himself which are, as he knows, a fairly apt reflection of the ones outside him. "Pity me," he pleads, "my confusions are the culture's schizophrenia. Galsky; Gillis. I live by the climate of opinion's injunctions:

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Other than confusion, his problem is that he doesn't feel guilt (unlike his wife, Nancy, who feels it all the time), nor is he overburdened with compassion for the foibles and nastinesses of his fellow human beings. One result of these traits is a penchant for speaking the truth (or, from Nancy's point of view, being "black-tongued." She wants to convert him into a writer, a satirist, so that he can be nice to people in the flesh, nasty only, if he has to be, on paper.) So he says to a donnish professor at Harvard, who asks Gillis's "truthful" opinion of him, "Sir, you are a creep." Such *uncaritas* makes him ripe for damnation, and the Devil, in Brooks Brothers clothes, appears to him in a Brattle Street restaurant and later follows him to California. The Devil is opposed by an elderly, compassionate Hassid who wishes Gillis to see that the bastards and creeps can't help it.

Much of this is wonderfully funny and also something of a relief from the self-absorbed intensity of other recent academic novels, or Jewish-academic novels. Yet it puts its finger quite as keenly on the unsteady moral pulse of the academy, and of America, as one could wish. What is particularly excellent in the way the divided hero keeps bumping against his divided culture, in a four-square dance of mutual self-contradictions. "Socially," explains Galsky-Gillis, "my schizophrenia comes from equal commitment to the culture's altruistic principles and its predatory practices. The result? I don't want to play the game, but I want to win."

Because the aim of the book is not just humorous transport but persuasion (we are urged to change, to live a little, to sever our allegiance with the side of ourselves which is inclined to waste our vital energies), the author faces a particular problem with his hero: Gillis must change too. So he is made to undergo a not-terribly-convincing conversion which involves, primarily, the birth of guilt and a revulsion against his own forms of emotional spend-thriftness (like chasing other women because Nancy has been a bit stand-offish). The change seems a little forced—perhaps only because one is too sympathetic with Gillis's lusty rompings and his black-tongued iconoclasm seriously to wish them away. But this problem—what to do with the sympathetic but unregenerate comic hero—must be a difficult one for any comic novelist who has a moral aim. Perhaps it only can be handled in the traditional manner of a sudden transformation.

The other weakness of the novel is a more-than-occasional straining for humorous effects, when the author is trying a little too hard and too self-consciously to be funny. But this is offset by the spontaneity

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and vitality which distinguish much of the work and make it a pleasure to read.

Practically nothing distinguishes Pamela Hansford Johnson's *Night and Silence Who is Here: An American Comedy* except perhaps the most stomach-turning set of adjectives describing colors (of very ordinary things like hair, and the sky) that one would be likely to find in recent fiction: "peacock," "glaucous," "butcher-blue" (?), "canary," "tangerine," "fawn," "mauve" (she is particularly fond of mauve), "turquoise," "hyacinth," "silver-gilt," and, of course, those old standbys of vivid prose "scarlet" and "emerald" (red and green to you, clod).

The story itself deals with the misadventures of a middle-aged English bachelor who comes to America as a Visiting Fellow at a New Hampshire college. So far so good: we have the classical international theme, and it should be Heaps of Fun, especially since the English hero is not to be spared his share of heart-warming human frailities. He's a dabbler, poor fellow, a dilettante, and like lots of upper-class Englishmen, not very used to doing anything for himself. Breakfast brought by the Manservant has been one of the mainstays of his universe—so, naturally, it's going to be rough when he has, for the first time in his life, to boil an egg for himself. But he struggles bravely with such domestic upheavals: he is after all a willing chap. He struggles on the academic front too: he doesn't really, the dear old fraud, know anything about anything, let alone literature, but here he's in America as the world's authority on a great minor poetess. This problem, though, he'll handle with true English savvy: he won't even try to make scholarly noises; he'll just be wonderfully urbane and elegant, and the Americans will marvel. Finally, he is moved to a struggle on the administrative front too: much more fun to take over the college than continue faking out his dreary critical book. True, ambition is a new emotion to him, but rather pleasing: "he liked the feel of it."

The venial faults of this book are, apart from its coyness and overblown style, the predictability of almost every "joke," dialogue that falls on the ear like cement blocks, and an abysmal ignorance of what is either good, bad, or even indifferent about the American academic scene which is the novel's setting and one of its presumptive satiric targets. But the mortal fault is that priggery and fakery, uselessness and dishonesty are elevated from the status of vice to that of folly, to be seen as forgivable, endearing, even adorable flaws of these creatures that cavort in our brave New Hampshire.

Sallie Goldstein

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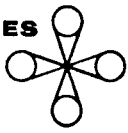

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DON QUIXOTE RIDES AGAIN

THE GATES OF HORN: A STUDY OF FIVE FRENCH REALISTS. By Harry Levin. Oxford University Press. $8.50.

DOCUMENTS OF MODERN LITERARY REALISM. By George J. Becker. Princeton University Press. $8.50.

The textbook account that divides French literature after Romanticism into Parnassianism-Symbolism in poetry and Realism-Naturalism in the novel is overdue for reappraisal. Such unassimilated cases as Barbey d'Aurevilly and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam make the pattern look very flimsy. It was not perverseness that led Baudelaire to welcome Balzac as a brother and a pure visionary. If we are lucky, the resurvey will produce some heated debate and one or two major books. As if in preparation, French critics have been publishing studies of individual figures and seem to have avoided for some thirty years any important new synthesis. (Michaud's and Beuchat's multi-volume histories of Symbolism and Naturalism respectively, appearing within two years of each other shortly after the war, serve their causes not by challenging the party line but by assembling a mass of documentation that blurs as much as it proves the *idée reçue*.) Many of the best recent volumes treating French literature of the period in its complex relations to society and politics have been written by foreigners—the Hungarian Georg Lukács, the Germans Bernhard Groethuysen and E. R. Curtius, the Englishman A. G. Lehman, the Italian Mario Praz, and the American Edmund Wilson. Professor Harry Levin's *The Gates of Horn* claims a place near the head of that list for the ambitiousness of its subject and the fullness of its scholarship. The nature and acceptability of its thesis will require close scrutiny. None of Mr. Levin's earlier books, on Joyce, on Shakespeare, on Marlowe, and on a group of classic American authors, has the scope of this one, which takes on single-handed the five outstanding novelists of an abundant era. He is not the first to annex Stendhal to one end and Proust to the other of the line of realists, yet his is the most convincing demonstration to date that the enlarged "dynasty" has a unity of vital statistics and accomplishments that outweighs its differences.

In brief the argument runs like this. Mr. Levin's profound concern is with "fabulation, man's habitual interest in telling stories to summarize his experiences and crystallize his attitudes, while ultimately passing them on to us." Fabulation may move in two directions, as suggested by the story Homer used of two gates of experience. The

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Gates of Ivory lead us toward myth, illusion, and dream; the Gates of Horn confront us with actuality, with the "truth." Rarely can a work of art pass through one gate only, yet one is always favored. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries Romanticism declared its faith in the experience of the Ivory Gates and appropriately named the poet's retreat an ivory tower. The movement known as Realism, though lured at the outset by the Gates of Ivory, veered resolutely toward the Gates of Horn. The characteristic action of Realism (witness such titles as *Les Illusions perdues* and *L'Education sentimentale*) is de-poetizing and antiheroic. Both lines of tabulation pose the eternal problem of the relation between art and life. Mr. Levin declares, in a chapter already anthologized, that the soundest way to account for the public and private aspects of literature, for its complementary or reciprocal relation to life, is to regard it as an institution. Acknowledging his debt to Sainte-Beuve and Taine, Mr. Levin moves in on all fronts—social, biographical, and formal—to capture the five novelists of his "dynasty": Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, Zola, and Proust.

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double temperament of all five novelists, the conflict within them between Don Quixote and Machiavelli. Stendhal's egotism and Proust's voyeurism alike can be traced to this tension between romance and realism, between poetry and politics. Mr. Levin's most effective chapters are those on Stendhal and Flaubert, partially because he concentrates his attention on two or three of their novels instead of scattering it across the broad reaches of a *roman fleuve*. At intervals the study provides penetrating analyses of the stock concepts that tend to nail the nineteenth-century into rigid shape: *l'art pour l'art, le mot juste, le mal du siècle* (which he insists on calling *la maladie du siècle* after Musset's original text), milieu, and egotism. One of the soundest statements about the realist novel comes early. "Its abiding preoccupation might be summed up in the single word *moeurs,* which must be translated by two different English words, 'manners' and 'morals,' but which retains the impersonality of the Latin *mores*."[1]

On a good number of points made in passing, Mr. Levin goes astray. Here are two unsubstantiated statements taken from the first chapter. "Ethics has generally held the upper hand over esthetics, which has only secured its occasional periods of independence through the opposition of differing ethical codes." "The irreducible element of individual talent would seem to play the same role in the evolution of genres that natural selection plays in the origin of the species." Comparable leaky generalizations crop up on Zola's monopoly of scientific imagination, on the Goncourt brothers' positive influence on Proust, and on Stendhal as "the most intransigent in his worldly rationalism." The treatment of Cervantes is more serious because more central to the argument of the book. Mr. Levin does not refine his presentation of *Don Quixote* beyond such schematic propositions as this: "Cervantes was proposing, not without regret, a pragmatic test for a waning chivalry . . . he undercut the precedents of knighthood with Sancho's peasant lore." That is only part of the story. What is too often missed in modern readings of *Don Quixote* (I am far from the first to make the point) is that, in spite of all, the foolish and romantic knight carries the day against "reality" in certain encounters; even Sancho's wiliness can be overcome by the sheer power of illusion. The absence of this nuance here and in a few other places has prevented Mr. Levin

1. In a work almost completely free of misprints and mistakes, which passes even the supreme test of spelling correctly without accent both Remy de Gourmont and Valery Larbaud, it is annoying to find the ligature systematically omitted in such words as MŒURS and ŒUVRE. In printed French the omission constitutes a misspelling. Since any good font of type in English includes ligatures, there is no excuse for their absence.

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from tracing clearly the circularity of his subject—how illusion fuses into reality and vice versa.

The chapter on Flaubert, though twenty pages longer than any of the others, fails to bring into focus why Flaubert is the pivotal figure of both the century and of the movement in question. For it is through the densely interwoven fabric of Flaubert's fiction—"scientific" beauty, the intensification of objects into heightened significance, the demoniac motifs, the musicality of the prose—that we can find our way across the artificial gap to Symbolism. Mr. Levin's broad institutional approach to literature never does come to grips with the question why the opportunistic bourgeois society of nineteenth-century France nourished both Realism and Symbolism, two powerful and apparently opposed literary currents. The examination of the matter in the last chapter is all too brief and oblique. The marxist critic Lukács, who is quoted, does not constitute final authority; he could not explain just why bourgeois Realism established the writer as a man who lives, and sometimes lives well, by biting the hand that feeds him. This anti-establishment status might have been clarified by a scrutiny of the relations between the mobility that characterized society and financial circles and individual careers, and the dazzling versions of mobility provided by Stendhal, Balzac, and Proust. Several such lines of investigation (for instance, the pertinence to human behavior of Claude Bernard's *milieu intérieur*, which Zola chose to neglect even though he modeled his semi-manifesto *Le Roman expérimental* on the great physiologist's scientific work, *Introduction à la médecine expérimentale*) might have led Mr. Levin to examine more closely the substance of Realism if not its outlines.

The style and format of the book call for comment, if only because future scholars may heed its powerful example. Mr. Levin has not sullied his pages with a single footnote, nor with a single superior or inferior number linking the text with the sixty packed pages of sources and references at the back. This great purge of apparatus shows an extreme case of reform measures being applied today in the house of scholarship. As a rule they are welcome. They require, however, that the text alone carry the full burden of information, hypothesis, example, counter-example, and proof. Mr. Levin's resourceful style, though marred by a tendency toward symmetry and antithesis, shows up well after something of a struggle in the opening pages. But the perpetual allusiveness of the writing borders on a form of elusiveness, for Mr. Levin never settles down to sustained textual commentary that would assemble and operate on one site the well-engineered machinery of his

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criticism. On the other hand he has mastered the art of turning the opening or closing sentence of a paragraph. Of Scott: "His was a dual role: the last minstrel and the first best-seller. . . ." Of Proust: "All that has been upgraded by snobbery will be downgraded by pederasty."

One of the rewards of *The Gates of Horn* is that it suggests a variety of questions that it never puts directly. What is the significance of the various forms of mother-fixation in all these authors, leading them to prefer maternal heroines, older mistresses, or pederasty? Can we casually dismiss Zola's unfashionable idea of the novel as an experiment, rather than a mere record, if we think of the running skirmish engaged in by these writers between sincerity and artificiality, passion and boredom, ambition and indifference? The semi-mythical figure of the dandy, unfortunately neglected by Mr. Levin, stands at the point of convergence of many of these artistic and ethical modes. And finally, how many laughs is Realism good for? I feel Mr. Levin overstresses the ironic strains in these books to the neglect of humor and straight comedy. In criticism as in the college classroom, irony has become too much a factotum category. Stendhal's "We happy few" approach and Flaubert's stylistic mask, insofar as they create distance by catering to an exclusive audience, restrict the basically popular appeal of Realism. Balzac's, Zola's, and Proust's often vulgar humor is essential to their vision, not incidental to it. Mr. Levin connects Zola's famous wind-breaking episode in *La Terre* to a fertility myth and appears a little distressed that it lies so close to the "stuff of *fabliau*." But that of course is the point. Realism creates a universe in which the fart need not be scandalous or grotesque or symbolic, but simply the measure of our hugely comic humanity.

We have good reason, on reading *The Gates of Horn*, to be grateful that Mr. Levin persisted in an early decision to turn his encyclopaedic mind to the novel and was not tempted to undertake a history of criticism. But the enormous promise of the book leads to partial disappointment. In detail he frequently breaks new ground. His treatment of *La Chartreuse de Parme* (it is almost rhapsodic) and of *Bouvard et Pécuchet* reveals a sensibility receptive to narratives not bound by conventional rules of form. The pages on Zola demonstrate the thoroughness of investigation and independence of judgment that underlie many unassuming paragraphs of exposition. Mr. Levin is sympathetic to so crucial an element as sheer energy in these novels. However this willingness to turn over mossy stones and enjoy his discoveries does not cohere into a single project; the bed of the river has not been moved. The brief concluding chapter, whose superfluous and never

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discussed epigraph is taken from the gospel according to Wittgenstein, misses its opportunity to test the essential meaning and historical validity of Realism. Instead, Mr. Levin spends his time arguing that the French novel has declined in the past thirty years. *The Gates of Horn* creates the illusion of being a definitive work because it traces more deeply than ever the large outlines of Realism that we began with. To some, this corroboration may be comforting, but to me it is disturbing.

Another recently published book deals with Realism as a significant European movement still alive in the twentieth century. George J. Becker's *Documents of Modern Literary Realism* reached me when I was reading the proofs of this review. The idea of such an anthology of texts with a long introduction is excellent and could be extended to other artistic movements. To have much circulation, however, the volumes would have to be edited with enough rigor to keep them well below the 600 pages (at $8.50) collected here. Mr. Becker does well by literary history—dates, origins, influences, and side-effects. A cursory reading shows his critical comments and choice of documents are most revealing on the Russians, from Chernishevsky to socialist realism; he yaws badly off course on the French. In his desire to let his texts "speak for themselves," he produces no one to write with much feeling on Stendhal, and only a few pages out of Taine to represent Balzac. Mr. Becker, even more than Mr. Levin, speaks for himself only in matters of details and leaves the big picture alone.

What the nineteenth century needs now, in literature as in politics and economics, is an intelligent revisionism rather than final summation. Mr. Levin's own pages convince me, though it is the contrary of his purpose, that it is a grave error to approach the novel through the gates of Realism. The term serves to divorce the novel from poetry, and "reality" from subjectivity. I suggest that the next expeditionary force entering nineteenth-century literature ponder Taine's neglected theory of perception and knowledge to which Mr. Levin refers briefly in his second chapter. "True hallucination," as Taine finally termed it toward the end of *De l'intelligence,* establishes the visionary nature of even the most documentary account of the world. Here is base camp.

Roger Shattuck

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JOHN SIMON

ACID TEST. By John Simon. Stein and Day. $5.95.

This is a fine, an admirable book. It is a collection of reviews of a wide variety of experiences Mr. Simon has had, at the movies, at the theater, at the picture galleries, and reading novels, poems, books about pictures, works of literary criticism. The voice we hear talking in the book—and one of its virtues is that it so distinctly *has* a voice—is of the sort that Shaw describes, "the living, breathing, erring, human, nameable and addressable individual who writes criticism," whose effort is always to get "away from the abstraction 'criticism' to the reality from which it is abstracted." It is a voice which is sometimes irritating, sometimes wastefully oblivious or defiant of good taste, sometimes delighted with itself at moments when self-delight seems unjustified, flamboyant at moments when flamboyance seems unhelpful or distracting. But it is fully alive and remarkably varied, and it expresses an intelligence that always seems to have available the knowledge relevant to the task at hand, all the equipment necessary to be the sort of critic that he is. The title and the book jacket lead us to expect something quite different from what we get: "Few critics have had as many enemies at an early age as John Simon has at 38"; "In New York, John Simon keeps a moat of troubled waters between those who would silence him and his eminent domain"; "You will disagree with him at least as often as his publishers do, but you will pay attention to *Acid Test* and to the books that follow, unless he is first assassinated." It all sounds quite exciting and fearful, but what we actually get is something far more honorable and interesting than what is promised. It is a mind which is capable of rendering with considerable exactitude its experience of actually attending a performance, reading a book or poem, looking at a picture, so that, even when one has occasion to disagree, one is disagreeing not with the blankness of an abstraction or a theoretical position but with the expressed concrete opinion of a voice that is alive.

He is capable, to be sure, of the tone his publisher is so pleased with: "Robert Creeley's poems have two main characteristics: (1) they are short; (2) they are not short enough"; "Ask a foolish question, and you will, if you are George Steiner, get up a bookful of foolish answers"; "And what of George Voskovec's tour de force? You'd never think that those dozen parts were all played by *one* actor. I didn't even think they were played by *an* actor." But he is also capable of things which give one

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a more complex pleasure and satisfaction. From the description of Poussin's "Death of Adonis":

> The mourning for Adonis is expressed in the prevalence of horizontals in sky and earth echoing the dead youth's prostration (as does the very shape of the canvas), and by the fact that trees that might be vertical are slanting as if bent with grief. Venus herself is bending lovingly over her dead lover, pouring nectar upon him from a nearly horizontal urn. Hers is a guileless, Giorgionesque loveliness, and her nudity is not provocative. More important here is the exquisite blend of the dramatic and the peaceful, the restraint in the coloring (except, perhaps, for the excessive greenness of the corpse), and the sadness controlled by a faint, gentle hope emanating from the beauty of the naked goddess and the charming cupids trying to revive the dead boy. Though the picture is profoundly gracious, it is not ornamental: decoration has yielded to decorum.

From an account of John Clements's performance of Macbeth:

> Clements scooted and rattled through the part as though the whole thing were an after-dinner speech to a group of Veterans of World War One, but just a few times, to murther their sleep, springing a howl and scowl on them. In the "Tomorrow and tomorrow" soliloquy he did, however, reach certain heights —albeit comic ones. Thus he bellowed his indignation at his dead lady: "She should have died *hereafter!*" ("Damn her!" we almost heard), and roared again, as an afterthought: "Tomorrow!" which, it seems, would have been the ideal time for her demise.

Things have been looked at, have been listened to, with remarkable care; scrupulous mental and moral attention has been paid; and the experiences are rendered carefully and scrupulously, not merely to "give an impression" but to substantiate judgments which are themselves coextensive with the rendering, the acts of description. That is to say, the critical acts, the acts of judgment, are abstracted as little as possible, with as little blurring as possible of the experience judged. This is true of him at his best.

One must complain about his lapses, which are not infrequent. Mr. Simon is often rude. Sometimes, of course, it is justified, and one's only complaint then is that gracelessness is uneconomical. When it seems unjustified, one's confidence in the critical voice is impaired. A more frequent, subtler, and more serious fault may be illustrated from his apostrophe to Zero Mostel:

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> High above everything else in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* is the mighty Zero Mostel, towering like a monument hewn out of the whitest Parian—cheese. Pungent, fatty, succulent, infinitely malleable, he is the memorial of (at least) twelve Caesars rolled into one, carved out of goat cheese, and lecherous like the goats it came from. No—it is, to paraphrase Pater on the Mona Lisa, a grotesquerie wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, large cell by cell, of strange thoughts, fantastic reveries and exquisitely gross passions. No—it is a sacred white elephant desecrated by his bestial cravings and trying to compress himself into a harmless mother goose. No—it is Zero Mostel, for whom Plautus already wrote his *Mostellaria,* and who will multiply even unto infinity like the zeroes in the defense budget. As Pseudolus, the wily slave, he manipulates the outraged pawns of the outrageous plot with the *savoir faire* of a cloudful of *dei ex machina.* When Mostel dances, he trips up the light fantastic; when he sings, it is like a choir of angels weeping; and when he mugs, we recognize the face that launched a thousand hardships on spectators averse to cluttering up the aisles with their rolling bodies. And his lines? If it is a line that has to be hit, he smacks it smartly with the back of his hand in the solar plexus, so that it never recovers. And if it is a line to be thrown away, he tosses it off with princely casualness, only to pull it short in mid-flight by an invisible rubber band. If ballet has its prima ballerina assoluta, Latin its ablative absolute, science its absolute zero, the theatre can proudly point to its Zero Absolute.

Delightful, evocative, and true. But—the line is very hard to draw—one comes to feel that the pleasure taken, the loving care, is deflecting itself from the performances of Mostel to the performance of Simon. There are times when the voice, the person, we hear speaking in the book becomes too simply a personality.

In the last essay in the book, Mr. Simon praises Robert Warshow for always looking "for that in an occurrence, in a work of art or non-art, which goes beyond the analysis of components and the evaluation of immediate causes and impacts." This is exactly the sort of critic that Mr. Simon is not. He himself is, thank heavens, very much the critic of occurrences, the analyzer of components, and, above all, the evaluator of immediate cases and impacts.

David Ferry

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